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A BRIEF DEFENCE OF
Supernatural Christianity

BEING
A REVIEW OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL PRINCIPLES AND
HISTORICAL ARGUMENTS OF THE BOOK ENTITLED
“SUPERNATURAL RELIGION.”

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* * This tractate, originally published as a supplement to the *Nonconformist* of January 27, 1875, is now republished, with a few corrections and additions, at the urgent request of Theological Professors and others who think it may render service to the cause of truth.

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A BRIEF DEFENCE

OF

SUPERNATURAL CHRISTIANITY.

THE author of the book entitled "Supernatural Religion" has girded himself for a great task—nothing less than to demonstrate that Divine Revelation is a "figment." But this task should not, according to his own showing, cost him much trouble, for Divine Revelation, he believes, is already in a "helpless position." "The results of scientific inquiry and of Biblical criticism have created wide-spread doubt regarding the most material part of Christianity, considered as a Divine revelation. The mass of intelligent men in England are halting between two opinions." And elsewhere things are even worse. Not, indeed, that all deniers or doubters of a Supernatural Revelation go far enough. They often make concessions which enervate their arguments. Ewald may eliminate the supernatural from all the miracles, both of the Old Testament and of the New. He may treat the miraculous birth of Jesus, and the miraculous events of the Crucifixion, as poetical imaginations. He may spiritualise the greater miracles ascribed to our Lord "until the physical basis is almost completely lost." The Resurrection of our Lord, he may regard as the creation of the pious longing and excited feeling of the disciples, and the Ascension as its natural sequel. But this is not enough. Ewald, whom our author describes as "one of the most profound scholars, but,

at the same time, arbitrary critics of this time," is classed among those "who have not distinctly" "rejected the miraculous altogether," and who "either resort to every linguistic device to evade the difficulty, or betray, by their hesitation, the feebleness of their belief." Even Mr. John Stuart Mill vacillates in his treatment of the question of the possibility of miracles, and "weakens Hume's arguments by the introduction of reservations which have no cogency." "The time is [now] ripe for arriving at a definite conviction as to the character of Christianity." And "there is no lack of materials for a final decision." They are stored up in the books of the Tübingen Theologians; and it requires only a skilled hand to draw them forth, and present them before the eyes of English readers to determine the question of ages.

We have done our best to understand and weigh all that our author has said. We have read his reproduction of old arguments with the closest and most candid attention of which we are capable; and must confess that we have not been able to discover that he has made any breach in the bulwarks either of natural or revealed religion. Of natural religion, we say, as well as revealed, for our author would take from us the one as well as the other, in as much as he will not allow us to believe in a God whom we can worship or trust. We shall give our reasons for rejecting his conclusions as clearly and calmly as we can, and if we venture to animadvert in any instance strongly, we submit the justice of our animadversion to the judgment of those who have read the book.

The book is called an "Inquiry." And an "Inquiry," even in the hands of one who has already made up his mind, should be calm, judicial, and fair. The author of "Supernatural Religion," knows this well, and says that his "main object has been conscientiously and fully to state the facts of the case, to make no assertions the grounds for which are not clearly given, and

as far as possible, to place before the reader the materials from which a judgment may be intelligently formed regarding the important subject discussed." The promise is good; our readers will soon judge whether it is not belied by the performance. In the discussion of the claims of the books of the New Testament, the Gospels in particular, to be the writings of the Apostles of Jesus Christ, and their companions, materials from which a judgment may be formed "*seem*" to be given. But they are given not in the spirit of a judge, but of a pleader, the validity of whose pleading cannot be known till his "neighbour cometh and searcheth him." In this instance our author's "neighbour" has "come" in the person of Professor Lightfoot of Cambridge, who, in the pages of the *Contemporary Review*, is "searching" him, and is exposing in detail, mistranslations which, if he is to be credited with "conscientiousness," can be explained only on the ground of defective scholarship, and assumptions and misstatements which can be explained only by referring them to the force of a strong, and we hope an unconscious, bias. We have no wish to weaken the arguments of an adversary by personal imputations of any kind. But our author has been so lavish of his imputations of "wilful" evasion, perverseness, and blindness, against honourable men who cannot see as he sees, that it is right that the tone and spirit of the book should be made known. Reviewers have for the most part taken him at his word, and given him credit for the fulness and fairness with which he credits himself. But Professor Lightfoot, in the two articles which have already appeared, has said enough to show how partial and one-sided, as well as inconclusive, is much of his argumentation against the Apostolic origin of our Gospels.

We must not pause to remark on the ambiguity of the expression, "*An Inquiry into the Reality of Divine Revelation.*" The book is simply an attempt to prove that a "Divine Revelation" is *a priori* incredible; and that "the Gospels," in

which the Christian Church believes it has an original and faithful record of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, came into existence after all the eye-witnesses of Christ's life had gone to their grave. On neither of these points has our author, notwithstanding all the learning of a certain kind which he undoubtedly possesses, said anything that is really new and important. But our readers will not fail to see that "an inquiry into the reality of Divine Revelation," or into the reality of the Divine Revelation which the Bible professes to contain, involves in it an inquiry into many things which this book ignores. And there is no indication in the book that our author has an idea of the comprehensiveness of the question, whether the claims of the Bible to contain a "Divine Revelation" are "real" or not.

The primary title of the book—"Supernatural Religion"—suggested to us at first the remark that at least the object of religion must be "Supernatural." God is not a part of nature. He is above it, and its author. In which case the first question to be determined is, whether He is a God "after the image" of the Epicurean idea, who cannot or will not concern Himself with mundane affairs, or whether He is an Actual Ruler of the universe He has made, and a very Father to the intelligent, but feeble and sorrowful race who people the earth. If a Ruler and a Father, the next question which naturally arises is, whether in the language of John Howe, God is "conversable" with men; whether there is or may be any genuine "correspondence" between God and men, that which Christians usually speak of as "communion" with God; and whether, in order to this communion, God has made Himself and His will known by other means than the manifestation of Himself in His works. These are questions which, one would think, should not be foreclosed by *a priori* reasoning, but should be answered in the light of positive evidence. But, advancing to Chapter Third

we find that the doctrine of a Personal God is an "assumption" which not only "cannot be proved," but is "totally excluded," by the study of the order of nature. So that the "God" of our Author is not "*Super-natural*." He is, like Professor Tyndall's God, to be found *in* nature. The basis of the argument of the book, discovered thus incidentally in the course of its development, is an unavowed Pantheism.

It will make the course of our argument more clear, if we state that the book we are considering consists of Three Parts, under the heads of "Miracles," "The Synoptic Gospels," and "The Fourth Gospel." We shall divide the first part into two, and put the second and third into one; thus giving a better idea of the course of the argument. The first we shall call "**FUNDAMENTAL**," because in it the author lays the foundation on which he bases an absolute denial of miracles under any circumstances. The second, including Chapters IV., V., and VI., we shall call "**TRANSITIONAL**," because, in these chapters, the author, without insisting on the abstract incredibility of miracles (except when necessary occasionally to strengthen a weak argument), prepares the way for the destruction of the credibility of the Gospels, by a prejudgment, founded on the superstitiousness and ignorance of the age. The third, including discussions on the Gospels which occupy by far the larger portion of the book, we shall call "**FINAL**," because, to a certain extent, the other portions of the book are introductory to it; although it cannot escape notice that if the thesis of the first part can be established—the antecedent incredibility of miracles—we may save ourselves the trouble of further inquiry.

PART FIRST.—FUNDAMENTAL.

We shall not attempt to follow "Supernatural Religion" in its criticism of Dr. Mozley, Dean Trench, Dean Mansel, Dr. Farrar, Dr. Stoughton, and others. It is an easy thing to play off one author against another, and to discover a loose joint here and there in the best constructed armour. But no progress is made in our "inquiry" into the reality of the Supernatural, by turning Dean Mansel's metaphysics against his theology, or by proving that some of Dr. Mozley's positions are vulnerable.

Our author takes pains in his first chapter to show that "English Divines have clearly recognised and asserted the necessity of supernatural evidence to establish the reality of Divine Revelation." This we admit and hold; but not in the absolute form in which he would thrust it upon us. We do not admit that "the peculiarities of the Revelation which miracles are to authenticate cannot have any weight." And we shall show by-and-bye that we are not reasoning in a circle when we take these peculiarities, or moral considerations in general, into account. At this point it is enough to say that we regard Christianity as in its very essence Supernatural—not so much a system of supernatural truths as a series of supernatural facts. We are not of those who, in the language of our author, "would throw to the pursuing wolves of doubt an unbelief, scrap by scrap, the very doctrines which constitute the claims of Christianity to be regarded as a Divine Revelation at all." The Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, the Ascension, of our Lord, are not, in our judgment, accretions to the most Primitive Christianity, but of its essence. And with Dr. Thomas Arnold, we believe that "what we call miracles were but the natural accompaniments" of such a Revelation "accompaniments the absence of which would have been far more wonderful than their presence."

DEFINITION OF A MIRACLE.

But what is a miracle? our author demands to know. And because various definitions have been given by believers in the Supernatural, he thinks he has nothing to do but to set them the one against the other, in order to set them all aside, and to allow him to give his own definition, or description rather, and declare them to be "opposed to the laws of nature"; or, in the language of Hume, to be "violations of the laws of nature." And yet, with all his insistence on this matter of definition, the only definition he gives himself of a "law of nature" is the slipshod one which we find in a foot-note. "Throughout this argument we use the term 'law' in its popular sense as representing the series of phenomena to which reference is made" (Vol. I. 38). It might be enough for us to say, that when he will give us a definition of a "law of nature" that shall contain the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, we shall have no difficulty in defining the relation of a miracle to the laws of nature. For the present we insist that the "Supernatural" is, as the word indicates, not that which is contrary to nature, or a violation of nature, but, as Dean Trench puts it, that which is *above* nature, or *beyond* nature. It is something out of the range of the action of natural law, and cannot, therefore, be said to be opposed to it. Both the natural and the Supernatural are modes of Divine action. But to us, on our side of things, or from our point of view, they are different modes. Take, for example, the production of food. The difference between the manner in which the harvest field, by means of spring and summer and autumn, produces food for thousands, and the manner in which the Christian story says it was produced on a memorable occasion on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, is not that the one was gradual and the other instantaneous. The processes which we trace in the former have nothing to do with the latter. No amount of time, with tillage

and rain and sunshine, could make loaves to germinate and grow into a larger quantity. The difference must be held to be more than a difference in degree or in mode. If we call the one natural, we must call the other supernatural. Even if we suppose that there were means employed in the latter as in the former, we cannot call them natural means—means traceable among the ordinary laws of nature. They must have been of a kind known to God alone. And the supposition of a possible existence of such means, occult and undiscoverable, will not justify us in confounding the natural and the Supernatural. The means themselves, under this supposition, are as supernatural as the end produced.

In a miracle, then, we say that the power of God produces an effect, or result, or event, otherwise than as effects, results, and events, are produced in the course of nature.

ANTECEDENT INCREDIBILITY.

"Incredible!" is the answer which our author, and others of his class, give to the averment that effects and results have ever been thus produced. In every variety of language, in the beginning and end of his book, the author of "Supernatural Religion" assures us, in almost passionate terms, that a miracle is inconceivable, incredible! He might as well have added "Impossible." The incredibility of miracles can be maintained only on the ground of their impossibility. And all reasoners on the subject—Mr. Stuart Mill and others—use the words freely as interchangeable. Now we might have expected that men who are always telling us that we can form no conception of God, would reflect that possibly the working of miracles, the producing of effects otherwise than in connection with the laws of nature, may be among the things unknown of God. But they speak rather as if they had measured the whole length and breadth of the Divine nature, had discovered all

about God, and were in a position to declare, with prophetic certainty, that God cannot and will not, under any circumstances, work otherwise than in connection with natural law. To make good their right to speak thus, they must produce supernatural credentials; they must work a miracle to prove that no miracle can be wrought!

Our author does not favour us with any definition of "impossibility;" but Mr. Mill has done so. To the definition that an impossibility is "that which there exists in the world no cause adequate to produce," he objects only that it does not take in such impossibilities as these—that two and two should make five; that two straight lines should inclose a space; or that anything should begin to exist without a cause. And the definition which he thinks will include all varieties of impossibilities is this; "an impossibility is that, the truth of which would conflict with a complete induction, that is, with the most conclusive evidence which we possess of universal truth." (*Logic II.*, 112, *Eighth Edition.*) Without discussing the propriety of so widening the definition as to include impossibilities which are only self-contradictions, such as that two and two should make five, it is evident that in the sphere of things of which we are now speaking, Mr. Mill would accept the definition that an impossibility is "that which there exists in the world no cause adequate to produce." For he adds, "As to the reputed impossibilities which rest on no other grounds than our ignorance of any cause capable of producing the supposed effects, very few of them are certainly impossible, or permanently incredible." "In order that any alleged fact should be contradictory to a law of causation," Mr. Mill says, "the allegation must be, not simply that the cause existed without being followed by the effect, for that would be no uncommon occurrence; but that this happened in the absence of any adequate counteracting cause. Now, in the case of an alleged miracle, the assertion is the exact oppo-

site of this. It is that the effect was defeated, not in the absence, but, in consequence, of a counteracting cause, namely, a direct interposition of an act of the will of some being who has power over nature; and in particular of a Being, whose will, being assumed to have endowed all the causes with the powers by which they produce their effects, may well be supposed able to counteract them. A miracle (as was justly remarked by Dr. T. Brown) is no contradiction to the law of cause and effect; it is a new effect, supposed to be produced by the introduction of a new cause. Of the adequacy of that cause, if present, there can be no doubt; and the only antecedent improbability which can be ascribed to a miracle, is the improbability that any such cause existed." (*Logic II.*, 167-8).

We need no other defence of the possibility or credibility of a miracle. True, Mr. Mill says that of any event or effect which seems to be miraculous, there is "another possible hypothesis, that of its being the result of some unknown natural cause." But in many of our Bible miracles there is no room for such an hypothesis. It would be an imposition on our reason, to imagine any unknown natural cause capable of restoring Lazarus or our Lord to life. And in cases in which to imagine such a cause would not be so violent, the means supposed to be used would be, as we have seen, as *super-natural* as the power which used them.

Mr. Mill says, likewise, "that no evidence can prove a miracle to any one who did not previously believe the existence of a being or beings with supernatural power." Without sifting the absolute correctness of this assertion, its converse is true—that no one can logically deny the possibility of a miracle, unless he denies the existence of a being or beings with supernatural powers. This is old ground, and ground from which nothing can drive us. But our author, with a strange obliquity—intellectual, we shall hope—cannot state it fairly. "Paley's argument," he says, "culminates in a short statement. 'In a word, once believe that there

is a God (*i.e.*, a personal God working miracles) and miracles are not incredible.'” The gloss enclosed within parenthesis is an absurdity of which Paley was not guilty, and of which no sane man would be guilty. To assume “a personal God working miracles,” would be to assume not the possibility or credibility of miracles, but their actuality. All that Paley assumes is the existence of a personal God. And his argument is, “in a word, once believe that there is a God,”—by which undoubtedly he means a “personal God”—“and miracles are not incredible.” That is, their possibility can be denied only on the ground of Atheism or at best of Pantheism.

PERSONALITY OF GOD DENIED.

This carries us forward to another stage of our author's argument. The doctrine of a Personal God is “an assumption which cannot be proved, and must be totally excluded.”

Now the man who holds this must not shrink from the consequences of his judgment. An “Impersonal” God has no self-consciousness, can exercise no volition, possesses no intelligence, is capable neither of approving nor of disapproving, never consciously does anything, and never can. In short, we do not know of any attribute that can possibly be ascribed to—we were going to say, to Him; but we cannot think of such a God as an existence at all, and can almost as little use the pronoun *it* as the pronoun *him*. Most certain it is, that if for convenience' sake we speak of the God of Pantheism as a being, it is a being whom we cannot love or worship, for he has no attributes that can be the object of either. Prayer to such a being would be no better than “an apostrophe to woods and wilds and waters; a moan cast forth into the viewless winds, or a bootless behest expended on a passing cloud; a plaintive cry directed to an empty echo that can send back nothing but another cry.” Strauss, indeed, demanded for his “universum” “the same piety which the

devotee of the old style demanded for his God." But it cannot be rendered. Whatever form of Pantheism you adopt, material, organic, mystical, or ideal, the root idea, "God is the universe and the universe is God," remains. And you cannot worship the universe, you cannot pray to the universe. It has neither eye to pity, nor hand to help. Pantheism is capable of worship only when the "all" is disintegrated into its parts, and then it becomes Polytheism. Portions of that "all" become endowed with an imaginary personality, and are worshipped or loved or feared, because they are supposed to be capable of consciously conferring good or inflicting evil. It is thus that Hindooism, which is fundamentally Pantheistic, has become practically an intensely Polytheistic.

Our author cannot be ignorant of the conclusions which German Pantheists have boldly avowed. All things that exist, including man and all his doings, are but manifestations of the activity of that "All" which is God. Freedom of the will is a phantom. All things and all persons are ruled by the iron sceptre of fate. Nero is as much a phenomenal manifestation of God as St. John. The wicked are only a form of his self-manifestation; sin is only a form of his activity. There are no speculatists in the land from which our author has mainly derived his weapons of offence against Christianity, who do not shrink from this avowal. God is everything; and if there be Satan, God is Satan; and evil is as properly deified as good.

With metaphysical questions as to what constitutes "Personality" it is not necessary that we should deal. Enough for our present purpose to quote a few words from Dr. Manning, Boston and Andover, U.S.:—"The seat of personality is in the will. It is not bound up with the idea of a given amount of being, whether less or more; but is essential to the idea of freedom, liberty, independent choice. There can be no personality in the material world; for that is without the determini-

power, it is the realm of fate. According to the Pantheist, there cannot [logically] be personality anywhere, for he lifts the iron sceptre of necessity over all things. But we know that we are free; nothing can uproot this conviction, or stand against it. In the freedom thus vouched for is the citadel of our personality, of all personality. To affirm that God is impersonal, is therefore to degrade Him below man; is to teach that He can never have the sublime sense of liberty which we all have; is to affirm that He must come out of the sphere of the infinite, and be as one of His finite creatures, in order to feel that He has the power of doing as He will. It is not the personality of God but of man, that is imperfect. God's being is not limited. Hence He is immeasurably above us, in all that goes to constitute Him a person. He is infinite in His being, and therefore as a person He is absolutely perfect." (*Half-Truths and the Truth*, pp., 172-3.)

To say then that the assumption of a personal God "cannot be proved" and must be "totally excluded," is to say, that the assumption of conscious will and intelligence having to do with the origination and government of the universe, cannot be proved and must be excluded. But we maintain that if anything touching the Divine can be inferred from the universe, or proved by it, it is the Personality of the Divine. The mutual adjustments and innumerable adaptations of nature are inexplicable, without the supposition of an originating intelligence. Modern scientists who look askance on the old argument from Design, at least in its popular form, argue that all forces must be traced ultimately to will-force. Our religious instincts, common to the most civilised and the most barbarous, find their only explanation in the existence of a conscious object to which they may address reverence and trust. Even moral science, fluctuating and uncertain as it seems, returns, in spite of all deflecting influences, to its proper centre in the doctrine of an

essential difference between right and wrong, and then directs the eye to a great Judge and Ruler. Were we discussing Mr. Matthew Arnold's form of Pantheism, it would be easy to show that the evidence which proves that there is a "power which makes for righteousness," proves that it is a personal power. The sense of responsibility of which we are conscious, is not an abstraction, a thought which we project from our own minds, a thought-process, a spiritual non-entity; it looks to a person, the author of the law, whose authority we feel, the Judge to whom account shall be rendered. The faith, variously begotten within us, that there is an enduring "power that makes for righteousness," is not faith in a blind, unthinking, unknowing, unknown, unknowable, something; it is faith in very God Himself, who hath implanted the sense of righteousness within us, who watches over righteousness when it is most oppressed, and who will finally adjudicate between good and evil.

Thus, so far is it from being true that the doctrine of a Personal God, Intelligent Creator, and moral Governor of the world, is not verifiable, not capable of proof, it is actually verified by many processes of argument which all converge on the same glorious conclusion. So far from being "totally excluded" by the course of nature, without it the course of nature is unaccountable and unintelligible. From the outermost regions of space, and the innermost recesses of consciousness, there come voices which proclaim the God in whose will the universe originated, and by whose will it is ruled—the Father of Spirits, our Father and our God. And when the notion of an indefinite impersonal, "*not ourselves*," shall have passed away, like the baseless fabric of a vision, the old, old Truth of Him who was, and is, and is to come, shall stand as a changeless and majestic rock, the stay and refuge of the whole creation.

CHARGE OF ANTHROPOMORPHISM.

But this is *Anthropomorphism*, we are told. And pages are expended in reiterating the assertion, and making it as offensive as possible. Xenophanes is once more placed under contribution. No matter that the old satire is threadbare; it is too good to be thrown aside. The point of it is simply this, that if oxen or lions could think in man's fashion, each would endow the Divine nature with its own form: "Then would horses depict gods like horses, and oxen like oxen." "This profane observation," we are informed, the ancient sage "illustrates by pointing out that the Ethiopians represent their deities as black, with flat noses, while the Thracians make them blue-eyed, with ruddy complexions." Theodore Parker and Herbert Spencer have availed themselves of the irony of the old Greek, and we are not surprised that Professor Tyndall should use our author's translation of it as a motto to his "Address."

Now, as a protest against "the base anthropomorphic mythologies of Homer and Hesiod," the satire of the sage of Colophon may be allowed to stand. But, as against either Natural Theologians or Biblical Theologians, it has no force. "If the Theologians taught that God had legs and arms, parts and passions, the satire might have some point; but since they expressly forbid such an assumption, it is difficult to tell where the force of the 'grotesque supposition' lies."

In connection with this subject, our author makes an assertion, which we must be excused if we call it audacious. "The Jewish idea of God was equally anthropomorphic," he says, "with that of the Ethiopians and Thracians which we have quoted, and those to be found in the 'base mythologies' of Homer and Hesiod!" We ask, was not "the Jewish idea of God" a protest against the "base" conceptions of God which filled the world? Was not one of the fundamental laws of Judaism this—"Thou

shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath"? Was not this law enforced by the solemn words—"Take ye good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of fire"? And was it not a chief function of the prophets to protest against all conformity to the "base" corruptions of the nations around, as a sin against the very "name" and nature of the true God? If our author does not know all this, he "has need to learn which be the first principles of the oracles of God." If he does know it, how dares he confound the Jewish idea of God with that of the Ethiopians who represented their deities as black, and that of the Thracians who gave to their ruddy complexions? The levity with which he treats this sacred theme is seen in his indulgence in a feeble hit at the Jewish character in the very next sentence—"Their (the Jews) highest conception was certainly that which least resembled themselves and which described the Almighty as 'without variableness or shadow of turning,' and as giving a law to the universe which cannot be broken." (Ps. cxlviii.) Passing by the fact that the words quoted are to be found not in a Jewish but in a Christian book (was our author conscious of this?), and accepting them as containing the Jewish as well as the Christian conception of God, it is evident that the anthropomorphism of the Old Testament was associated with such ideas of God as reduced all references to the Divine hands and eyes and feet to figures, and as should have sufficed, and did suffice, to prevent the Jews from transferring to their notion of God any human passion or affection which partook of imperfection or sin. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself" (Ps. l. 21) was not the correction of an intellectual misconception, but a rebuke of men who acted practically as if God would not care to punish their wickednesses.

We must be excused dwelling somewhat on this point. It is of extreme importance. Our author considers the idea of personality as anthropomorphic, that is, as transferring to the nature of God that which belongs only to the nature of man. Professor Tyndall considers the idea of a power working with conscious intelligence towards the production of the various existences of nature as anthropomorphic. He contrasts "the method of nature" with the "technic of a manlike artificer;" he rejects "the notion of creative power acting in the human fashion;" and describes the common theistic theory as that of "a detached Creator, working more or less after the manner of men." To ascribe creation, then, to a conscious will and intelligence is to speak of it after the manner of men; it is that awful thing anthropomorphism. Creation has been developed unconsciously from an unconscious source, which, in our helpless ignorance, we are to call "the womb of nature."

Let us see where this lands us. We must have a God. Absolute Atheism is repudiated. Professor Tyndall recognises "an immoveable basis of religious sentiment in the nature of man." But the object of this sentiment must in no sense partake of the nature of man. That would be anthropomorphism. Whereunto then shall we liken the God we are in search of? Rejecting the domain of consciousness, and will, and intelligence, as supplying no likeness of God, we must explore the domain of matter and force, and peradventure we shall find it there. But if we do, it will partake in some way of the nature of matter and force. And the end is that, instead of rising to a higher conception of God, we sink to a lower. Forbidden to find any notion of God in the spiritual nature of man, we must be content to find it in unspiritual and unintelligent matter.

Shut up to this conclusion, we are quite prepared to adopt the motto which Professor Tyndall borrows from Lord Bacon:—

"It were better to have no opinion of God at all than such an opinion as is unworthy of Him; for the one is unbelief, the other is contumely."

We fall back on the old way as truer, more rational, more worthy of God. "Forasmuch as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone" (Acts xvii. 29), or any other form or species of matter. If we are God's children, we are like God and God is like us. This is the anthropomorphism of nature as well as of the Bible. The foundation of the anthropomorphism of Scripture is the historical statement that God made man in His own image. And this, as a fact of nature, is the foundation of the rational anthropomorphism without which all ideas of God become shadowy and unreal.

Dr. Carpenter, who would not choose to be numbered with the "orthodox," recognises the truth of nature which is implied in, or underlies, anthropomorphism. He speaks of Pantheism and Anthropomorphism as "the two extremes towards one or other of which most of the current notions regarding God may be said to tend," but says of Anthropomorphism that "even the lowest form of any such conception, embodies a great truth, this namely, that *It represents the Deity as a person; that is, as possessed of that intelligent volition, which we recognise in ourselves as the source of the power we determinately exert through our bodily organism, upon the world around; and it invests Him also with those moral attributes which place Him in sympathetic relation with his sentient creatures*" ("Contemporary Review," October, 1872, p. 762). This idea of the personality of God, of which our author thinks it sufficient condemnation that it is in some sense anthropomorphic, does not, as alleged, "dwarf the Supreme Being." It is the idea of Impersonality that dwarfs Him; yea, rather, that kills Him.

We maintain, with Mr. Isaac Taylor, "that, not less in relation to the most highly cultured minds than to the most rude,—not less to minds disciplined in abstract thought, than to such as are unused to generalisation of any kind,—the Hebrew Scriptures in their metaphoric style and their poetic diction, are the fittest medium for conveying, what it is their purpose to convey, concerning the Divine nature, and concerning the Spiritual life, and concerning the correspondence of man, the finite, with God, the Infinite." It has always been true and is still, "that the Hebrew writers stand possessed of an unrivalled prerogative as the teachers—not merely of monotheism, but *of the spirit-stirring belief of God*—as near to man by the nearness or homogeneousness of the moral consciousness. Near to us is He, not only because in Him we live and move and have our being, but because He—Infinite in power and intelligence—is in so true a sense one with us, that the unabated terms of human emotion are a proper and genuine medium of intercourse between Him and ourselves." (*Hebrew Poetry*, p. 2.)

We dwell on this point because it really involves the essence of the question at issue between us and the author of "Supernatural Religion." The possibility or credibility of a miracle is conditioned on the personality of God. The assumption of such personality, he says, must be "totally excluded." The conception of God as personal, it is further contended, is Anthropomorphic. Now we are quite prepared to admit all the necessary or legitimate consequences of this contention. Will our author accept all the necessary and legitimate consequences of his belief in an impersonal God, a God without "intelligent volition," who, to use Mr. Matthew Arnold's words, "neither thinks nor loves"? To the common understanding, indeed to any understanding, it is difficult to explain wherein such a God differs from "no God." Most certain it is that this abstraction can never say "I," and can never be addressed as "Thou." It

may prevent speculative thinkers from consciously plunging into the gulf of Atheism, but it can do no more.

HUME'S ARGUMENT.

We will not follow our author in his attempt to rehabilitate Hume's argument against the credibility of miracles, and to save it from the element of weakness which he thinks Mr. Mill has introduced into it. It is not necessary. Nothing can save Hume's argument from the charge of being essentially a *petitio principii*. To multitudes, not of the credulous and superstitious, but of the most intelligent thinkers, miracles are not only credible, but actually credited. It is rather too much to talk of their "incredibility," in the face of the fact that the greatest names in every department of knowledge, in all the Christian centuries, are the names of men who have actually received them as historic facts. Even men whose special study has been history, and whose principles of historic evidence have destroyed the historic credibility of much that was commonly accepted in the world—Niebuhr, for example—have received "the historical facts in Christ's life, with all their miracles, as equally authentic with any event recorded in history." "Moreover," wrote Niebuhr in 1818, "a Christianity after the fashion of the modern philosophers and Pantheists, without a personal God, without immortality, without human individuality, without historical faith, is no Christianity at all to me; though it may be a very intellectual, very ingenious philosophy. I have often said that I do not know what to do with a metaphysical God, and that I will have none but the God of the Bible, who is heart to heart with us." The "incredibility" on which our author and men like him insist is then but the creation of their own minds, as much an abstraction, without concrete reality, as their idea of God.

SUPPOSED BEARING OF THE PROGRESS OF SCIENCE ON THE
CREDIBILITY OF MIRACLES.

There is a fallacy connected with this subject which pervades sceptical writings—namely, that the difficulty in the way of accepting miracles is increased, and increasing, by the progress of modern science. By-and-bye, we are taught to believe, the difficulty will be altogether insuperable. And in the course of a few years, no one with any wit will be found capable of faith in the old-world stories which are found in the Bible. If it be so, it is time we took heed to our ways. But let us look into the matter. *What is the real difficulty in the way of believing in a miracle?*

It is our faith in what is called the constancy of nature. The same antecedents, we believe, are always followed by the same consequents. Than this law there is not a more unfailing or universal characteristic of nature. Whether our faith in it is a deduction of reason from the general experience of mankind, or is, as Dr. Chalmers used to argue, “an immediate and resistless principle of belief in the human constitution,” matters nothing at present. The fact is admitted. And in our daily life we act on the faith of it.

Now—is this fact of the constancy of nature rendered in anywise more certain, or is our faith in it in anywise increased, by the progress of science? For if it is not, the difficulty which it creates in the way of believing in miraculous occurrences is in no wise increased. The constancy of nature, we maintain, was as certain a thing in the days of Moses as it is now, and was as certainly believed in. Men believed as firmly then as they do now, that fire burns and water drowns. They had no more doubt when they lay down to rest, that the sun would rise at its appointed time, than we have. When they

ploughed their fields they knew that the seed they sowed would produce unfailingly "after its kind"—that thorns could not bear figs, nor thistles grapes. The holy books which contained records of miraculous occurrences, taught them at the same time that this constancy of nature is itself the ordinance of God. And when the modern scientific age dawned, it found men already believers in it. And from that day until now their faith has been the same. The astronomer of to-day does not believe in it more implicitly than did Sir William Herschell, and Sir William Herschell's faith in it was not stronger than Sir Isaac Newton's, and Sir Isaac Newton's was not stronger than that of Copernicus; and, we venture to add, the faith of Copernicus in the constancy of nature, as seen in the starry heavens, was not stronger than that of the old Chaldeans—when they gazed with wonder on "Arcturus and Orion and Pleiades" (Job ix. 9). True, as Mr. Mill says, the law which regulates comets and eclipses was not known, and these phenomena may have been popularly regarded as signs and omens of human fortune. But faith in the constancy of natural laws was undoubting, notwithstanding. And the Hebrews were taught by their prophets to regard the fixedness and invariableness of the "ordinances," of both the heavens and the earth, as the sign and pledge of the unchangeableness of the love and care of their God (Jeremiah xxxi. 35, 36).

It is a great mistake, then, to imagine that this faith in the constancy of nature depends on the progress of science. We are indebted to science for an immense extension of the area of our knowledge, and for a better understanding of what is already known. And what remains of possible progress in the future, may far exceed the past. But if the future shall be as the past, its only effect will be to deepen our conviction of the unity of the creation; and, inferentially, of the unity of mind, and of intelligent design, in which the relation of its parts originated

and by which they are ruled. This will increase our awe and wonder, when we contemplate the vast whole. But our conviction of the constancy of nature is already so established, that it can scarcely be said to be capable of confirmation and increase. The difficulty, whatever it be, which it creates in the way of faith in miraculous occurrences, continues to be just what it was, and nothing more.

Now, how was this difficulty met and overcome before the days of science, and when science was still young? Not, assuredly, by supposing that nature is so ill and imperfectly constructed as to need occasional and arbitrary supernatural interventions to repair it, or to keep it in order. Anti-supernaturalists persist in thus misrepresenting the opinions they oppose. Thus the author of the book before us speaks of faith in supernatural occurrences as if it involved, "the idea of an order of nature so imperfect as to require or permit repeated interference," and "the supposition of arbitrary suspensions of law." He ought to know better. No believer in the supernatural imagines that God works miracles "arbitrarily," or to repair the defects of nature. It is not by any such "supposition" that we overcome the difficulty which the constancy of nature interposes to our faith in miracles.

The difficulty is overcome, first of all, by what we regard as positive and sufficient evidence that miracles have actually taken place. Whether they have or have not, is a historic question, and should be answered simply according to the principles of historic evidence. We demand that the reality of the miracles of the Bible be determined by the evidence which supports them; without any *a priori* prejudice, except to this extent, that being extraordinary, it is quite lawful to exact more evidence than we should require for ordinary events.

The difficulty is further overcome, when we associate the

miracles in which we believe with the great moral purposes of the Divine dispensation with which they are connected. We have nothing to do, be it remembered, with "the Mythologies of Homer and Hesiod," nor are the miracles in which we believe casual and isolated facts, or alleged facts, occurring arbitrarily here and there in the world. They all belong to what claims to be a continuous purpose of Redemption, incarnated, so to speak, in human history, revealed in progressive stages, and consummated in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Unbelievers may disallow this claim. But if they would judge of Bible miracles aright, they must judge of them in connection with it. Connecting them, as we do, with the spiritual history to which they belong, all *a priori* prejudice against them melts away, and we feel with Dr. Thomas Arnold, that their absence would be far more wonderful than their presence.

The progress of science, we have seen, does not increase the *difficulty*. We have now to ask whether it affects in any way *the reasons which thus outweigh the difficulty*. This it can do only by impairing the historic evidence on which we accept the Bible miracles as facts, or by demonstrating that mankind need no such Redemption as these miracles presuppose. Our conviction is that hitherto it has done neither, that it has shown no sign even of an incipient capacity to do either, and that no imaginable progress in the scientific knowledge of the material universe, and of its relations to man, can ever supersede the necessity of that spiritual deliverance which is the avowed aim of Christianity. Of the latter of these averments we may have something further to say. Of the former we need only say that the remoteness of the age of the Christian story cannot in any way affect its certainty. Facts lose none of their certainty by the lapse of time. The landing of Julius Cæsar on the coast of Kent, more than nineteen hundred years ago, i

not less certain to-day than it was when Cæsar's own account of his wars was given to the world; and if England should be a nation for another thousand years, the certainty of this and of other events in its history will in no wise be diminished. The certainty of the story of Christ is not less now than it was when Paul preached it to Greek and Roman in the first century; and when the twentieth century shall come, or the twenty-fifth, or the thirtieth, time will have thrown no doubt upon it. The books which have brought it down to us, and the institutions originating in its facts, which have given it a continuous visible body from the beginning until now, will render the same service, unimpaired by age, to the generations that shall follow us. The events which constitute the substance of Christianity, could, from their very nature, take place only once in time—one Incarnation, one Sacrifice, one Redemption—and it were strange, indeed, on the supposition of their being true and real, if means could not be found to make them as certain to the remotest age as well as to the earliest.

THE ALLEGED DUAL CHARACTER OF MIRACLES.

We must now consider an argument which our author puts in the very forefront of his book, and which he reproduces in its last pages—by which he imagines he places the believer in the supernatural evidence of a supernatural revelation, in a dilemma from which there is no escape. It is purely an *argumentum ad hominem Christianum*, and is urged with all the one-sidedness of a pleader who is more intent on victory than on truth. Christian writers are quoted, one after another, to show that the Christian belief is, that a Divine Revelation cannot be substantiated without miracles. And then we are told that, according to the authoritative books of the Christian faith, old and new, miracles may have a Satanic origin as well as a Divine,

may be wrought, in fact, "to attest what is false as well as to accredit what is true" (I. 2). The obvious deduction from which is that "the source and purpose of supernatural phenomena must always be exceedingly uncertain," and their "evidential value" be thus made of none effect. (Vol. I., 13; II., 478.)

We pass by the misinterpretations of Scripture, by which our author is led boldly to aver that God Himself is represented as performing false miracles, and "exerting His Almighty power to deceive," and confine ourselves to the substance of the difficulty—a difficulty which we are not afraid to put in the most pointed form. (1) "Moral truths," it is alleged, "require no miraculous evidence. They can secure acceptance by their own merits alone." (2) Supernatural truths do not appeal to reason, or the moral nature in man. (3) Supernatural truths cannot, therefore, be attested without miracles. But (4) miracles may be either Satanic or Divine; and, therefore, (5) the evidence of "supposed supernatural phenomena" can possess "no potentiality."

The general truth of the first of these averments may be admitted. The Bible uniformly appeals to the "moral nature" in man; and says in effect, "Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" And yet we can imagine circumstances in which God might be pleased to teach moral truth, and enforce moral duty, by a special Revelation. According to our author himself, the "two fundamental principles" of the ethics of Jesus Christ, were "love to God and love to man." Now we can imagine men so sunk in ungodliness and selfishness as to have lost all idea of either duty, and needing a voice from heaven to recall them out of their low moral estate.

The second of our author's postulates we utterly deny. The supernatural truths of Christianity *do* appeal to our reason and moral nature. "What reply," our author asks triumphantly

"can reason give to any appeal to it, regarding the doctrine of the Trinity or of the Incarnation"—doctrines "which reason can neither discover or comprehend"? We answer that these doctrines cannot be separated from the great Remedial or Redemptive scheme to which they belong; and that this scheme, including these doctrines, does appeal to reason as most reasonable, and to our moral nature as meeting the terrible necessities of our condition in a manner which only Divine wisdom and mercy could have conceived. You may isolate the doctrine of the Trinity, and state it scholastically as an abstract definition of the Divine Nature, and awaken no response from the reason, because it is confessedly above reason, and no response from the heart, because, so stated, there is no point at which the definition and the heart can meet. But put it where the Bible puts it, in the great purpose of Redemption, and it becomes at once vital and influential. The history of the propagation of Christianity in our own times is full of evidence that it is not the "ethics" of our faith, but its Redeeming Love, that first touches the heart, and awakens the moral sensibilities even of the lowest of our race.

It is historically untrue that "whatever beneficial effect has been produced by Christianity has been solely attributable to its morality." And it is beside the mark to maintain that "supernatural dogmas have no virtue in themselves." The assertion that "wherever, as in the Eastern Church, dogmatic theology has been dominant, civilisation has declined," derives its only force from the ambiguity of the phrase "dogmatic theology," and from what is concealed from view in the word "dominant." Our author may attribute to "ecclesiastical Christianity" what he pleases, unless he includes in the phrase, as he often seems to do, "Apostolic" Christianity. But the fact remains that it was the "supernatural" message which Paul, as the "Ambassador" of the Heavenly King, preached at

Corinth, that turned so many of its morally-loathsome citizens to a pure life. And the same message produces the same result to-day. So that we maintain the very opposite of the postulate laid down by our author; and hold that the supernatural truths of Christianity *do* appeal to our reason and our moral nature.

But not only so. "Supernatural truths," even when attested by miracles, may be so associated with moral truths and moral facts, as to acquire additional force from the association. It is so, beyond all question, in the instance of the supernatural truths of Christianity. They are associated with a moral teaching which, according to our author himself, is "the perfect development of natural morality," so perfect that it may be regarded as "final"; and, to say the least, with a singularly noble and beautiful character, described by our author as one of "unparalleled purity and elevation." "Supernatural truths addressed to men by such a teacher, and in connection with moral truths of the loftiest order, might still need the attestation of miracles for their implicit acceptance. But every one must feel that if the miracles attested the truths, the truths commended the miracles. So that, rightly understood, the aphorism of Pascal, substantially that of Theophylact, is not a mere reasoning in a circle:—"Doctrines must be judged by miracle miracles must be judged by doctrines." That is, they are mutually corroborative and confirmatory, or the reverse.

It is with certain limitations, then, that we accept the third point in our author's argument—that supernatural truths, in other words, a Divine Revelation, cannot be substantiated without miracles. This he finds the common teaching of Christian writers, and he thinks it likewise the doctrine of the Bible. But he would separate the doctrine from all qualifying or explanatory limitations. "The patriarchs," he says, "and the people of Israel generally are represented as demanding a 'sign' of the reality of a communication said to come from God, with

out which, we are led to suppose, they not only would not have believed, but would have been justified in disbelieving, that the message actually came from Him." Gideon and Hezekiah (Judges vi. 17; 2 Kings xx. 8) are quoted in proof; and our author adds, "It is, however, unnecessary to refer to instances, for it may be affirmed that upon all occasions miraculous evidence of an alleged divine mission is stated to have been required and accorded." The incorrectness of this appeal to Scripture would justify us in ascribing to its author either culpable ignorance or culpable carelessness. There is not one instance on record in which "the patriarchs" demanded a "sign" of the reality of the communications which came to them from God! Abraham asked no sign (at least, we are not told that he did) when he was commanded to get out of his country and from his kindred, and received the promise that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed. There is no mention of a "sign" either "required" or "accorded," when Noah was divinely warned of the coming flood, and instructed to build an ark to save himself and his family. How Abraham and Noah were assured that the voice they obeyed was the voice of God, and not of their own imagination, we are not informed. But the Bible tells us of no "signs." Even "the people of Israel" did not "generally" demand "signs" from the prophets who spoke to them in the name of the Lord. For the most part, the reality of the Divine communications was attested by their conformity to the law already given, by the consciences of the people, and by the spirit in which prophets spoke; although sometimes peculiar circumstances and specific threatenings rendered "signs" necessary. John the Baptist, we are expressly told, "did no miracle." And we are not aware that he received any "sign," even for his own satisfaction, except in the circumstances of his birth, of which he was no doubt fully informed. His ministry, although supernatural in its origin and authority,

needed no miracle. It was an appeal to the consciences of the people, founded on Divine laws, and threatenings, and promises with which they were already familiar.

But there are "missions" which we not only admit, but maintain, need miraculous signs for their attestation. That of Moses, when commanded to go and bring Israel out of Egypt was one of them. The feeling which he expressed when he said, "They will say, the Lord hath not appeared to thee" (Exod. iv. 1), was natural and rational. Moses knew human nature, and he knew the Israelitish nature in particular, debased and depressed by long years of cruel bondage. Let him go to them as a patriot burning to deliver them from their bondage let him, by his eloquence, light the fire of freedom in their bosoms, and kindle a flame that shall melt their chains. In such a character let him do what he can for the emancipation of his brethren. It will be for them to reckon the chances of success in an attempt to throw off the yoke of Egypt, and to say whether they will risk all, life itself, in one great effort to be free. Moses can only use argument and persuasion, like other patriotic deliverers, and trust in the blessing of the God of judgment for a successful issue. But it is not in the character of a patriot, self-moved, or even God-moved, that he is about to return to his brethren. He is going to tell them, in the name of the God of their Fathers, that the hour of their deliverance is come, that Jehovah has appeared to him in a most mysterious way, has expressed his deep compassion for his people, and has charged him to go and stand before the tyrant who oppresses them, and demand of him, under pain of Divine judgment, to release his bondsmen. And in these circumstances Israel *must* arise and prepare, in the face of all difficulties, to march forth to freedom. It is not an open question which they may debate with one another and with Moses, whether success is possible or probable, and whether it will be wise of them to incur the

fearful hazard of showing signs of restlessness and dissatisfaction. They must arise and depart, that they may serve the God of their fathers.

But how shall they be satisfied that the message and pretensions of Moses are genuine? and that he is neither deceiving nor deceived?

I may stand up in the face of all London, and say, "Repent of your sins, and if ye repent not ye shall perish." And London has already sufficient knowledge and conscience to justify me in demanding repentance, without calling on me to work any miracle. But if I enforce my call to repentance by saying—"The God of Heaven has appeared to me in a vision of the night, and commanded me to say to London, You have sunk into worldliness and idolatry, and, so long as you hold by your ships and warehouses and workshops, you will be worldly and idolatrous still; you must prepare to leave them and go forth to the most desert regions your country possesses: the trumpet of God shall sound on a certain day, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, let every man, woman, and child, howsoever employed, arise and go forth for ever from the scenes and occupations of their present life, to receive a new law from God, and to serve Him where He shall please to determine." This message contains no *internal* evidence of its being from God; it goes far beyond what the universal conscience can recognise as Divine, and beyond what previous knowledge, whether acquired from revelation or otherwise, would lead the people of London to accept as obviously from God; and the people would have a right to ask, "What sign showest thou?" And if no sign should be given, they would be very fools to forsake their homes and follow me into the wilderness.

This will help us to appreciate the circumstances in which Moses was returning to Egypt, and the necessities of his position. He needed no miracle to call the people to repentance.

But he did to justify him in demanding that they should receive him as having come from the very presence of God, to break their yoke, and to lead them forth to the foot of Mount Horeb.

The power which Moses received to give supernatural evidence of his mission was "the beginning of miracles," *so far as the use of them to attest a Divine commission is concerned.* And the after use of miracles for this purpose was not lavish, but most sparing—a fact which has an important bearing on the question whether Bible miracles are legendary or historical. Jonah delivered in the streets of Nineveh a proclamation which would seem to require some supernatural attestation—"Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed." But none was given. He was himself, indeed, a "sign" to the people of Nineveh. The tale of what befell him when he attempted to flee from the presence of the Lord was, *if believed*, a proof of the supernatural origin of his mission. But no evidence could be given of its truth, but the word of Jonah himself. And that such a "fanatic," as he seemed to be, should invent the tale, would be regarded by many as its most rational explanation. Both the proclamation and the tale needed "signs" to confirm them. But no sign was given. Jonah, like John the Baptist, "did no miracle." He preached to the conscience of the city. And the men of Nineveh turned from their evil way. If this history be legendary, how comes it to pass that the spirit which invented or dreamed the story of the storm and the great fish did not follow the prophet into the streets of Nineveh, and surround him with prodigies there? The circumstances were all favourable to the generating of "wonders," and we can account for their absence only on the supposition that the Book of Jonah is historical and not legendary.

The outcome of this appeal to Scripture, into which our author's assertions have led us, is that revelations have been recognised by their receivers as Divine without miraculous

attestation; that they have been communicated to, and accepted by others, as Divine, without miraculous attestation; and that when miraculous attestation has been given, these two things are very palpable—first, that there has been a manifest necessity for the giving of supernatural signs; and, secondly, that these signs have never been independent of, but always associated with, high moral considerations.

CULMINATION OF THE ARGUMENT FROM THE DUAL
CHARACTER OF MIRACLES.

We now come to the fourth stage of our author's argument, in which he evidently imagines that he has found "a short and easy method" of dealing with faith in the Supernatural. Miracles, according to the Bible, we are told, may be wrought by the Devil as well as by God. Our author himself does not believe in a personal Devil any more than in a personal God; but as we do, and as our Bible, he says, ascribes to this Devil super-human powers, the miracles in which we believe may possibly be his work rather than the work of God! The plausibility of this argument renders it necessary that we should consider it carefully.

The difficulty thus raised is of the Bible's own making, having nothing to do with the question of the credibility of miracles *per se*, which belongs rather to the domain of Philosophy, or of Natural Religion, than to that of Revelation. So that the first duty of a professed "Inquirer," like our author, is to ascertain exactly what the Bible says regarding false miracles as works of the Devil. Let this be done, and it will be found that the leading texts on the subject do not, to say the least, *necessarily* ascribe to Satan a miraculous power over physical nature. They are, (1) the warning against false prophets who might arise, and give "signs and wonders" to draw Israel away from the

Living God (Deut. xiii. 1-5); (2) our Lord's warning, "There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matt. xxiv. 24); and (3) the Apostle's prediction of the "mystery of iniquity," whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders." (2 Thess. iv. 7-9.) This last expression—"lying wonders" or "wonders of falsehood"—may be regarded as descriptive of the entire category of evil works against which all these warnings are directed, and may mean either pretended miracles, so wrought as skilfully to deceive observers, or real miracles wrought by Satanic agency to propagate falsehood. In either case, they would be "after the working of Satan." Only, in the former, his "working" would be merely the power of moral temptation, which is commonly ascribed to him in the Bible; in the latter alone would there be implied any miraculous power over physical nature. It is not easy to determine which interpretation is the true, or whether both may not be true. But when we examine the "lying wonders" to which the predictions of Christ and of Paul referred, as we find them in the pages of Church history, they do not contain any evidence of the actual exercise of supernatural power (we do not forget what Dr. Newman and our author say on the subject), but abundant evidence of intentional deception and imposture, and of "lying" invention "of wonders" which never took place. The "liquefaction" of the blood of St. Januarius is not supernatural, but it is after "the working of Satan," the imposture of lying priests. In the Cathedral of Antwerp we were told, some years ago that certain spots on the face of a life-size figure of the Virgin were caused by powder at the siege of the city in 1830, and that no amount of paint could efface them—they always reappear. So the priests, our guide said, instructed the people. Lying wonders of this order are rife to this day in

every Roman Catholic country. But while their "father" is the devil, they are not the fruits of any Satanic Supernatural power. Nor do we know of any facts in Old Testament history which would necessitate the supposition that the false prophets against whom Moses warned the nation, ever exercised a miraculous power over nature.

But if we admit the possibility and actuality, in certain circumstances, of a Satanic power over nature, as in the events recorded in the Book of Job, an impartial inquirer should ask, *secondly*, In what relation does this power stand to that of God? Can Satan exercise it at his will? To explain the good and evil that are in the world, must we fall back, as some modern prophets think we may with advantage, on the old Zoroastrian theory of co-ordinate eternal powers, Light and Darkness, ruling conjointly, though with perpetual mutual antagonism, in the world? In this case it would be difficult to escape from the dilemma in which our author places us; but, according to the Bible—and we must let the Bible explain itself—the power of Satan is not co-ordinate with, but subordinate to, the power of God, and although he is, through man's moral default, the prince of this world, there is a Higher who says, "Thus far, and no farther."

Having reached this point, the inquirer should ask, *thirdly*, for what ends the Bible represents God as allowing Satan to exercise his power,—whether it be merely power to tempt men to pretend to work miracles, or power to enable them actually to do it? The standard text, so often quoted (Deut. xiii.), answers this question clearly: "The Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul." With the defence of the Divine dispensation which allowed men to transform themselves into Angels of Light, in order to test the loyalty of Israel to their God, we are not now concerned;

but we scarcely know how to deal with an author who cannot distinguish between such a dispensation and the ascription of false miracles to God Himself. If the Bible asserts the fact of Satanic agency, it gives an explanation of the fact, and the two must go together.

If our "Inquirer" had pursued an investigation such as we have suggested, and such as he was bound to pursue, he would then have found (1) That the Bible does not record one case of a supernatural work wrought by Satan in attestation of a false communication—and *this is the only kind or end of Satan working with which the subject in dispute has anything to do* (2) That the power ascribed to Satan, of whatsoever kind, is not co-ordinate with, but subject to, the power of God, and, consequently cannot be so used as to throw any doubt on the will of God, except to those who are willing to be deceived. (3) That the Divine warnings against the action of Satan, or rather against wicked men claiming to be prophets, and professing to work signs and wonders (for Satan is not referred to in Deut. xiii. 1-5) are designed to protect great moral and spiritual truths against all comers.

In this last point there is a principle which extends far beyond the case of the Jew, who could test the teaching of all professed prophets by the Mosaic law. Our author insists on excluding all consideration of the character of the things revealed from the question of supernatural attestation, and argues as if the doctrine of the Bible and of Christians was, that, given a supernatural attestation, we must believe that two and two make five, or that falsehood is a right and virtuous thing. With our idea of God, a miracle to attest what is self-contradictory, or what is morally wrong, is "inconceivable." What our author so carefully "puts asunder," God as carefully "joins together" in the teaching of the Bible, namely, the attestation and the truth attested. Christianity, which is the perfected or

fully developed form of Revelation, addresses itself to our whole nature, intellectual and moral; and if, while professing to show "signs" to prove its superhuman origin, it did violence to the fundamental laws of our nature, we should have reason to suspect the genuineness of its signs.

We need not pursue this subject farther. We have said enough to show that the "dual character" of miracles is more an imagination than a reality, and that the supposed action of the devil does not destroy the evidential value of miracles. Neither the prophets nor Christ, as represented in the Bible, appealed to a "dry intellect," far less to the mere senses of men, to compel such an assent as we render to an ocular or a mathematical demonstration. They left it quite possible for men to resist or to disbelieve, because their appeal was much more to the heart and conscience than to the mere understanding. And many did resist and disbelieve. Some actually said, "This fellow casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. To which charge, or to the supposition of its possibility, we are content to reply with Jesus himself, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation. If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself. How, then, shall his kingdom stand?" And we do not fear to submit to the boasted "verifying faculty" of the critics who would try all things by the subjective test of their inner consciousness, or whatsoever else they choose to call it, the question whether the works of Christ were the works of a devil, or his words the words of a devil. And we demand a verdict in the old terms—"These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?" (John x. 21)—a verdict justified by Mr. John Stuart Mill, whose posthumous works show him to have been nearer the kingdom of God than was supposed, in whose last pages we read, "Who among his disciples or among their proselytes was capable of inventing the

sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee; as certainly not St. Paul, whose character and idiosyncrasies were of a totally different sort; still less the Christian writers, in whom nothing is more evident than the good that was in them was all derived, as they always confessed that it was derived, from the higher source" (*Essays on Religion*, p. 253-4).

PART SECOND.—TRANSITIONAL.

THE AGE OF MIRACLES.

The author of "Supernatural Religion," having proved to his own satisfaction—of the validity of his proofs our readers can now judge—that miracles are "antedecedently incredible," proceeds to show that "the age" of the Christian miracles was so utterly dark, ignorant, and superstitious, that it were sheer folly to accept its evidence in support of the Supernatural. Even "the Apostles and Evangelists were men of like passions, and also of like superstitions with others of their time, and must be measured by the same standard."

The proofs in support of the position of the three chapters in which our author thus labours to prepare the way for the discrediting of the historical evidence on which Gospel miracles rest, are abundant of *their kind*. But some of them are singularly irrelevant. The Book of Tobit, for example, written according to Ewald, 350 years *before* Christ, is first appealed to: as if a book written in the reign of Henry VIII. could prove the state of England in the reign of Victoria! The comes the so-called "Book of Enoch," the appeal to which is more legitimate, because it may be regarded as nearly contemporaneous with the time of Christ. The riddle of this book has not yet been solved. And there are not sufficient data for the solution. So far as our present argument is concerned, what needs to be proved is that the fables and fancies of the book reflected the popular superstition. Our author next adduces evidence from Josephus, from Rabbinical traditions, and from the Christian fathers from the end of the second century downward. And he fortifies his own views of the age of Christ by an extract from Dr. Milman, whom he credits as

he does no other English Divine—with the “enlightenment of the nineteenth century.” But is it fair to quote this one part without any reference to the other side of the picture, to which Milman devotes many pages—the decadence of belief and the valence of Sadduceeism in the heart of Gentilism and of Judaism in the time of Christ? And is it fair to ignore the testimony which our Gospels render to the character of the age, except so far as to say that they are as explicit as the Book of Enoch regard “demons and exorcisms.” Even if they were written in the end of the second century, as our author has tried but failed to prove, they are better entitled to be called as witnesses than any others that can be adduced. It is confessed that they bear a “close analogy” to the earlier Gospels which they are supposed to have superseded. And they give us what the Book of Enoch does not, a clear and full insight into the sentiments of the people. And of the people, we know that while they welcomed in crowds the benefits which Christ’s miracles conferred, they were not credulous in deducing any inferences therefrom. They wanted “another king,” a king of a different order, and other miracles, prodigies more conformable to the notion they entertained of the coming Messiah. Christ’s miracles, moreover, were witnessed and scanned by the most hostile eyes. The Pharisees, Sadducees, and Zealots, whose character in Josephus accords entirely with their character in the Gospels, all opposed Him resolutely, but on separate grounds peculiar to each sect; and they would have exulted in the discovery of any flaw in His words and works. But such flaw was never found.

All this has an obvious bearing on the question, whether the superstition and ignorance of the age was such as to discredit any evidence that can be furnished of the performance of genuine miracles by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was surrounded everywhere by sharp-sighted and malicious enemies, and n

where by any class of men who were predisposed by superstition to follow Him. And if there be evidence that He wrought miracles, the character of the age forms no reason why we should refuse to listen.

WHENCE THE CHRIST IN SUCH AN AGE ?

But while we do not accept our author's picture of the age as the whole truth, we ask, How could such an age have produced such a man as Jesus Christ? "Great men," said a writer in *Macmillan*, a few months ago, "are the representative men; they embody in a visible, distinct form, and proclaim in an audible, unmistakeable tone, the instincts, the aspirations, which are semi-dormant in the hearts of the noblest and best of the people of their epoch, and which struggle in vain for utterance. In this consists their greatness, that they feel and express the wants and desires of their age as no one else has done. Hence their history is a glass in which humanity finds itself reflected; it is the echo of the world's voice." But Jesus Christ did not reflect the humanity of his age, and did not echo its voice, not even that of the "noblest and best" of its people. The pictures of superstition which our author gives us are, he is careful to tell us, "the views deliberately expressed by the most educated and intelligent part of the community," and, he says, "it would have required infinitely darker colours to have adequately portrayed the dense ignorance and superstition of the mass of the Jews." Of such an age Jesus Christ could not have been the natural product.

For what was He? "A unique figure," says Mr. Mill, "not more unlike all His precursors than all His followers, even those who had the direct benefit of His teaching." "A man of unparalleled purity and elevation of character," says our author, "surpassing in His sublime simplicity and earnestness the moral grandeur of Chakya-Mouni, and putting to the blush the some-

times sullied, though generally admirable, teaching of Socrates and Plato, and the whole round of Greek philosophers. He presented the rare spectacle of a life, so far as we can estimate it uniformly noble and consistent with his own lofty principles, and that the 'imitation of Christ' has become almost the final word in the preaching of His religion, and must continue to be one of the most powerful elements of its permanence" (*Sup. Rel.* ii. 487). Whence this "unique figure" in the history of mankind? this solitary embodiment of an "ideal excellence" which Mr. Milne cannot find either in the "God of the Jews" or in the "God of nature?" What "concurrence" of moral "atoms" has produced this most supernatural phenomenon? Is it not itself a "sign and a wonder," transcending the giving of sight to the blind, or even the raising of the dead? Signs such as the latter have been wrought, or have been represented to have been wrought, by other men divinely endowed, but imagination itself has not surrounded a second name with the halo of perfection and sinlessness.

The question, Who and whence this man? acquires additional importance from our author's acknowledgment of the character of His teaching. "His system might not be new," he says; "but it was in a high sense the perfect development of natural morality, and it was final in this respect, among others, that superseding codes of law and elaborate rules of life, it confined itself to two fundamental principles—Love to God and love to man. Whilst all previous systems had merely sought to purify the stream, it demanded the purification of the fountain. It placed the evil thought on a par with the evil action. Such morality, based upon the intelligent and earnest acceptance of Divine law and perfect recognition of the brotherhood of man, is the highest conceivable of humanity, and, although its power and influence must augment with increase of enlightenment, it is itself beyond development, consisting as it does of principles un-

limited in their range and inexhaustible in their application. Its perfect realisation is that true spiritual Nirvana, which Chakya-Mouni less clearly conceived, and obscured with Oriental mysticism—extinction of rebellious opposition to Divine order, and the attainment of perfect harmony with the will of God" (ii. 487-8).

"Such a system," it is added, "can well afford to abandon claims to a supernatural character which have been raised for it in ages of superstitious ignorance." On which we remark, but only in outline, (1) That the claim to a supernatural character for Christ's system is coeval with the origin of the system. Mr. Mill recognises it as a fact, that Christ Himself openly proclaimed that His teaching did not come from Himself, but from God through Him. (2) That our author's historic authority for ascribing to Christ a moral system so perfect that it is beyond development, is authority equally for the supernatural works and claims of Christ, and if the latter be rightfully rejected, the former is deprived of the only historic foundation on which it rests. This is true, whether *our* gospels belong to the first century or to the second. It is from *our* gospels that our author knows what Christ's moral system was. And the fullest exposition of that moral system which these gospels contain, ends with one of the most extraordinary supernatural claims which He ever put forth, the claim to be the Lord and Judge of mankind. (Matt. vii. 21-23.) And throughout the whole record, the moral and the supernatural are so interwoven that they cannot be separated. (3) Rejecting the supernatural, our author does not even attempt a natural explanation of the position attained by Christ, as the originator of a perfect moral system. Now we demand that before we surrender one explanation of this "wonder," we be furnished with another. And the other must be adequate. Our author justly condemns those who would "eliminate from Christianity every supernatural

element which does not quite accord with current opinion," yet cling to it as "a miraculously communicated religion." His own position is equally untenable. The "moral Christianity" which he gives us as the true, could not "come out of Nazareth." Whence was it? There are moral improbabilities as well as physical. And that a system such as Christ's confessedly should originate in the self-taught and self-cultured soul of a Nazarene carpenter, one of the "mass of the Jews" whose "ignorance and superstition" were so dense that words scarcely describe them,—and that never once in the world's history have "the noblest and best" of mankind, in the most favoured circumstances, produced anything to compare with the system of this Nazarene,—is an improbability as great as any which can be alleged against the miracles of the gospel. And in the terms of Hume's argument against miracles, we may say that it is contrary to all experience, and therefore not to be substantiated by any testimony. Yet, somehow, it happens to be true. The Nazarene carpenter, living in a densely superstitious, and, we may add, deeply corrupt, age, was all at once more than all that Mr. Mill and our author describe him to have been. The only thing "contrary to experience" is that such a man should have been produced by such an age, or could have arisen except by the operation of laws and causes unknown to "nature."

Our author's argument is that testimony to the Supernatural coming from an age so superstitious, cannot be credited. But to us there is nothing more supernatural than the character of Christ. And if the age furnished witnesses capable of bearing testimony to *Himself*, why should it not have furnished witnesses capable of bearing testimony to His *works*? It required less understanding to appreciate and narrate works which were visible to the eye, than so to appreciate the profoundly spiritual, and, in a sense which our author himself

would probably admit, divine character of Jesus, as to be able to convey to us the impression of its "unparalleled elevation and purity." Even if we do not insist on its strict supernaturalness, its purity and elevation remain. And the age which, by whatever means, has preserved to us the precious legacy of the knowledge of it, could by the same means preserve to us, untainted by superstition, the knowledge of any outward facts in which it manifested itself to mankind. This argument is confirmed, inconsistently enough, by our author when he says that "the religious feeling which influenced the composition of the Scripture narratives of miracles naturally led to the exclusion of all that was puerile and ignoble in the traditions preserved regarding the Great Master." According to the showing of our author's book, "the religious feeling which influenced the composition" of the gospel narratives was profoundly superstitious, and was the parent of all the miracles recorded, and should have surrounded these miracles, as other mythological miracles are surrounded, with the puerile and ignoble. But the fact is recognised, and that is enough for us, that there is nothing puerile or ignoble in the record. So that those who handed down the story of Christ were not incurably incapacitated for being witnesses of the purest and noblest life ever lived. But they were incapable of inventing or imagining the majesty and beauty of that life. And the only sufficient explanation of the gospels is their own: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you."

The argument of our author would reduce God to greater impotence in the Divine sphere than man in the human. Had He willed to give to the world a supernatural revelation, and to attest it by supernatural works, He could not, according to our author, have done it at any earlier period than the eighteenth or nineteenth century of our era! Even so late as the seventeenth century, men, enlightened and famous, like Sir Thomas Browne

and Sir Matthew Hale, believed, we are reminded, in witcraft. And until men so understand the "order of nature" to rise above all such superstition, their testimony to the supernatural must be worthless! We fear that even the nineteenth century is not sufficiently enlightened to render its testimony any value to the centuries which are to come. For the author of the future will be able to adduce abundant proof that many of "the best educated and most intelligent part of the community" of our times believe in superstitions as great as in which Sir Thomas Browne and Sir Matthew Hale believed—witness the pilgrimages to Paray-le-Monial and La Salette. And the only conclusion we can come to is, that the only persons fit to bear witness to the supernatural are those who believe the supernatural to be "antedecedently incredible" and who would not believe in it "even if one rose from the dead!"

Verily, the gulf between God and man is great indeed. This is the third impossibility which stands in our way in "Inquiry into the reality of Divine Revelation." The "order of nature" creates the first; the alleged dual character of miracles, the second; and the want of sufficiently enlightened witnesses, the third! And these are impossibilities which God Himself cannot overcome. So that whether He wills it or not, or whatever may be the urgency of human want, He is doomed to the epicurean enjoyment of His own Olympus; He cannot make His voice heard or His hand seen on earth.

PART THIRD.—FINAL (THE GOSPELS).

We should now proceed to consider our author's "Inquiry" into the claims of our four Gospels to be considered original records of the words and works of Jesus Christ. But we leave the details of this subject in the hands of Canon Westcott and Canon Lightfoot. The articles by the latter, which have already appeared in "The Contemporary," show his thorough mastery of the questions at issue; and we do not wonder that the author of "Supernatural Religion" has deemed it necessary to rush at once to the rescue of his work. The preface to the forthcoming edition of Dr. Westcott's "Survey of the Canon," which has been published separately, contains in its forty-six pages ample evidence of his power to defend his own, and gives some amusing, perhaps we should say astounding, illustrations of the character of the mass of references which crowd the pages of "Supernatural Religion" and give them such an air of learning. Canon Westcott give us in detail the results of his examination of ten references by which "Supernatural Religion" supports a strong statement of a certain thing being "demonstrated." And it appears that of the ten only one gives any reason for the opinion asserted; the opinion itself is accepted by one Dutchman and one Englishman; some give no opinion; and some halt in their opinions! "It seems quite needless to multiply comments on these results," says Dr. Westcott; "any one who will candidly consider this analysis will, I believe, agree with me in thinking that such a style of annotation, *which runs through the whole work*, is justly characterised as frivolous and misleading. It suggests the notion that the contents of a common-place book have been emptied into the margin without careful collation and sifting. But it

should be remembered in adopting such a process, if I may only borrow the language of the author, that "a good strong assertion becomes a powerful argument, since few readers have the means of verifying its correctness." The pages of "Supernatural Religion" are burdened with lists of names and writings "which have (according to Westcott) in many cases no value whatever for a scholar, while they can only oppress a general reader with a vague feeling that all 'profound' critics are on one side."

This is not the only imposition practised on the understanding, or rather imagination, of his readers, by our author. The strange names which crowd his pages are supposed to be great names. But Professor Lightfoot gives us a good illustration of their value as thinkers and interpreters. These words in the Epistle to the Philippians are well known: "I beseech Euodia and I beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. And I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also" (chap. iv. 2, 3). Words cannot be plainer, and a English child would not stumble over them. But how do the German authorities of our author interpret them? The first named is, without doubt, an able man—the founder of the Tübingen School; and the perverting influence of a preconception is therefore the more striking. Professor Lightfoot says:—"Baur suggested that the pivot of the Epistle, which has a conciliatory tendency, is the mention of Clement, a mythical or almost mythical person, who represents the union of the Petrine and Pauline parties in the church; then Schweglé carrying the theory a step further, and declaring that the two names, Euodias and Syntyche, actually represent these two parties, while the true yoke-fellow is St. Peter himself; the Volkmar, improving the occasion, and showing that this fact indicated in their very names, Euodias or 'Rightmay' and

Syntyché or 'Consort,' denoted respectively the orthodoxy of the one party and the incorporation of the other ; lastly, Hitzig lamenting that the interpreters of the New Testament are not more thoroughly imbued with the language and spirit of the Old, and maintaining that these two names are reproductions of the Patriarchs, Asher and Gad,—their sex having been changed in the transition from one language to another—and represent the Greek and Roman elements in the Church, while the Epistle to the Philippians itself is a plagiarism from the Agricola of Tacitus ! When therefore (says the Professor mildly enough), I find our author supporting some of his more important judgments by the authority of ' Hitzig, Volkmar, and others,' or of ' Volkmar and others,' I have my own opinion of the weight which such names should carry with them." How Hitzig and Volkmar, any more than two priests, can look each other in the face, over such interpretations as these, without laughing, we wonder. And yet it is to these, and such as these, that we are asked to surrender our common sense.

With the names of our two illustrious English Theologians, we should associate in this matter the name of Dr. G. P. Fisher, of Yale College, author of a very able work, entitled, "The Supernatural Origin of Christianity," who has written a valuable series of papers on the book, "Supernatural Religion," in the (New York) *Independent*.

ON PRINCIPLES OF EVIDENCE.

We shall not enter into any minute examination of our author's criticism of the patristic evidence, but there are several points of general interest to which we ask attention.

First of all, we demur to the principles laid down in these words :—"Requiring as we do clear, direct, and irrefragable evidence of their [our Gospels] integrity, authenticity, and historical character, any doubt or obscurity on these points

must inevitably be fatal to them as sufficient testimony—if they could, under any circumstances, be considered testimony—for miracles and a Divine Revelation” (i. 214). The reader will not fail to perceive that this author would not accept even “clear, direct, and irrefragable evidence” of the integrity and authenticity of the Gospels, as sufficient testimony for miracles. In fact, he is bound by his principles to reject all evidence, that of his own eyes and ears included, for miracles are “antecedently incredible.” But we direct attention especially to the assertion that “any doubt or obscurity” on the historical character of the Gospels would be fatal to them as sufficient testimony. We might say from our standpoint, that there is no doubt and no obscurity on the subject. In the words of Mr. Isaac Taylor, “The integrity of the records of the Christian faith is substantiated by evidence in a tenfold proportion more various, copious, and conclusive than that which can be adduced in support of any other ancient writings.” (*The Transmission of Ancient Books, etc.*, p. 5.) The evidence, taken especially in connection with the substance of the Revelation, has produced the most undoubting conviction in many naturally incredulous minds. But still we object to the abstract principle that “any doubt or obscurity” must be held fatal to it. Instead of so bold an assertion, our author should have introduced his “Inquiry” into the claims of our Gospels by a discussion, or, at least, a full statement, of his own views of the true principles of historical evidence. This he has conveniently left undone; his mind is made up, and his mission is to destroy.

Of one thing he is quite conscious—the importance of our Gospels to our Faith. And in this we agree with him. Those familiar problems of English literature—who wrote the *Eikon Basiliké*? and who wrote the letters of Junius? whatever interest they may possess for the curious and for students of history, are of no practical moment. The solution of them, if

accomplished, would neither forward nor retard the world's progress, nor can we conceive of its affecting one human spirit for good or ill to the end of time. But who wrote "Matthew," "Mark," "Luke," and "John," cannot be determined without the most momentous issues. Were the authors of these books contemporary with Christ, and competent by knowledge, either personal, or personally acquired, to record faithfully the sayings and doings of the Great Master? To prove that these books are the composition of a later age would not suffice for the purpose our author has in view, the elimination of the supernatural from the true Christ and His life, but it would be "a sore discouragement" to our faith.

It may seem strange that it is only by the roundabout way of historical research and criticism, that we can reach the conclusion that certain books bear the seal of God. We might have expected that books, designed to be authoritative records of a Great Revealer, such as we believe Jesus Christ to have been, should have been given to the world amid signs and wonders which would at once proclaim their origin. And if the marvels contained in these books were the fruit of a superstitious love of the marvellous, we should have found some phenomenon of this sort associated with the history of their entrance into the world. But, ignorant and superstitious as were the first three centuries of the Christian era, according to our author, we find nothing of the sort; it was left to the ninth or tenth century to invent a fabulous miracle that should account for the recognition of the Canonical Scriptures. The actual history of the giving of Apostolic books to the world is in harmony with God's ordinary procedure, as reflected in the books themselves. There is in these books, as we have seen, not a plethora, but a parsimony of miracles. Inspiration itself, real and effective as we believe it to have been, did not supersede the natural workings of the intellects of inspired men.

The Church founded by Christ was committed to the care of Providence, without permanent supernatural powers. And it was only in harmony with all this, that the precious books, in which all ages were to find a mirror of the Christ of all ages, should be, as it were, cast on the world subject to what some would call the world's chances, but under that guardian Eye which never slumbers nor sleeps. Christ Himself did not overbear men by the evidence of His divine mission. And we are not "offended" that the Holy Books in which he is imaged to us, have a history which leaves ample scope for the direct and indirect influence of the will and heart on the understanding.

Our author must be familiar with the distinction between Probable or Moral and Demonstrative evidence, and must know full well, as Lord Bacon puts it, that the "application of the differing kinds of proofs to the differing kinds of subjects" is a fruitful source of error, and that both "the rigour and curiosity in requiring the more severe proofs in some things" and "the facility in contenting ourselves with the more remiss proofs in others," have been "amongst the greatest causes of detriment and hindrance to knowledge." He must be aware, likewise, or we must remind him, that the canon which he has laid down would destroy the one article of his own creed, an Impersonal Supreme Being. It cannot be said that no "doubt or obscurity" rests on the evidence of this first principle of Pantheism. To our mind it is more than doubtful or obscure. The principle itself is a mere negation. And when it is accepted, we cannot imagine what of positive is left in the "Supreme Being." The doctrine of the Trinity is confessedly above Reason; the doctrine of an Impersonal God is contrary to reason.


THE MYTHOLOGICAL EXPLANATION OF SUPERNATURAL
CHRISTIANITY.

Secondly, we find the only explanation which our author attempts of the supernatural in Christianity utterly unsatisfactory. It is to be found in vague statements like these:—"The world is full of illustrations of the rapid growth of legendary matter, and it would indeed have been little short of miraculous had these narratives been exceptions to the universal rule, written as they were under the strongest religious excitement at a time 'when almost every ordinary incident became a miracle,' and in 'that mythic period in which reality melted into fable, and invention unconsciously trespassed on the province of history.'" (Vol. II. 482.)

The words put by our author within quotation marks are from Milman, and are quoted at greater length elsewhere; but "the mythic period," of which Milman speaks, "in which reality melted into fable," and of which he says also that "some of the Christian legends were deliberate forgeries, and the principle of pious fraud appeared to justify this mode of working on the public mind," was *not* the age to which our author's argument refers, but hundreds of years later, when the spirit of monkery was crushing out the spirit of Primitive Christianity. And, as we shall see immediately, Milman distinctly pronounces against the "mythic" character of the age of Christ. In further explanation of his views of the origin of the Supernatural in Christianity, our author says:—"Between the 'superstition,' 'imaginative excitement,' and 'pious fraud' of the early Church, and 'the deliberate and audacious fraud' of the later, we have abundant material for the natural explanation of all supposed miracles" (Vol. I. 200). This is summary enough, but it reminds us of nothing so much as the facility with

which a cloud of dust may be raised, and the difficulty of fighting such an adversary. What has to be accounted for is not "supposed miracles" scattered here and there through the Gospels—but the Christ of the Gospels and the Christianity of the Gospels, all supernatural together. And to say that these originated in the ignorance, superstition, and pious frauds of debased and grovelling minds, is to say that the constancy of nature has failed at last, and that in this instance folly has produced wisdom, and falsehood truth; darkness has created light; chaos has given birth to kosmos; while out of the unclean has come the most clean and beautiful of all the forms of religious thought that have blessed humanity.

It will be observed how important a part the terms myth, mythic, and mythical, play in this controversy. And an author who challenges popular beliefs to the bar of philosophy and science, because "the time is ripe for arriving at a definite conviction as to the character of Christianity," might be expected to tell us what he understands by a "myth," and what by a "legend," and to explain under what circumstances myths are produced, and under what circumstances legends gather round facts. But it is far more convenient for the purposes of destruction to leave these terms in a mist, and to appeal to a vague popular sentiment which may be expressed in a modified form of an old saying: "*Omne ignotum pro malefico.*" Myth and legend are synonymous terms with our author, who explains neither, but puts one or the other into his sling as may be most convenient. His German masters could have instructed him in this matter. *Mythus*, according to Strauss, "is the creation of a fact out of an idea; *legend*, the seeing an idea in a fact or arising out of it." According to this definition the myth is "pure and absolute imagination; the legend has a basis of fact." Professor Powell says—"A myth is a doctrine expressed in a narrative form; an abstract moral or spiritual



truth dramatised in action and personification, where the object is to enforce faith, not in the parable but in the moral." Strauss endeavoured in his first essay to destroy the historic basis of Christianity, to carry out this, the proper, idea of a myth. Critics as unbelieving as himself soon proved his scheme to be impracticable; but the words 'mythical' and 'mythological' are too useful in the vocabulary of unbelief to be thrown away. To be restricted to the term 'legendary' would take not a little from the impression of their arguments. It may be that the mythical and the legendary are sometimes intermingled, but it is not the less true that the popular use of these terms serves no purpose but to confound.

Our author, we have seen, endeavours to draw a *quasi*-support of his views of the origin of Supernatural Christianity in the superstitiousness of the age, from Dean Milman. Why did he not, like an honest man, tell his readers that the Dean himself repudiates any such explanation, and actually works out an elaborate argument against it?

MILMAN ON THE MYTHOLOGICAL THEORY.

"The hypothesis of Dr. Strauss (Dr. M. says) is that the whole history of our Lord, as related in the Gospels, is mythic, that is to say, a kind of imaginative amplification of certain vague and slender traditions, the germ of which it is now impossible to trace. These myths are partly what he calls historical, partly philosophic, formed with the design of developing an ideal character of Jesus, and of harmonising that character with the Jewish notions of the Messiah." But, asks the Dean, "can the period in which Jesus appeared be justly considered a mythic age? If by mythic age (and I do not think Dr. Strauss very rigid and philosophical in the use of the term) be meant an age when there was a general and

even superstitious belief in wonders and prodigies, mingled with much cool incredulity, this cannot be denied. The prodigies which are related by great historians as taking place at the death of Cæsar; those which Josephus, who is disposed to rationalise many of the miracles of the early history of his people, describes during the capture of Jerusalem, are enough out of the countless instances which could be adduced to determine the question. But if the term mythic be more properly applied to the idealisation, the investing religious doctrines in allegory and symbol; above all the elevating into a deity a man only distinguished for moral excellence (the deification of the Roman Emperors was a political act) appears to me to be repugnant to the genius of the time and the country."

Dean Milman gives the following reasons for the utter rejection of the mythical explanation of the Gospels:—(1.) It is unphilosophical, because it assumes dogmatically the principal point in dispute—namely, that any recorded interference with the ordinary and experienced order of causation must be unhistorical and untrue. (2.) The belief in some of the supernatural events of the Gospel, *e.g.*, the Resurrection of Christ, is indispensable to the existence of the religion. To suppose that this belief grew up after the religion was formed; to assume these primary facts as after-thoughts, seems to me an absolute impossibility. (3.) Besides this inevitable inference that these things *must have been* the belief of the first Christian communities, there is distinct evidence in the Acts of the Apostles (though Dr. Strauss, it seems, would involve that book in the fate of the Gospels), in the Apostolical Epistles, and in every written document and tradition, that they were so. The general harmony of these three distinct classes of records, as to the main preternatural facts in the Gospels, proves incontestably, that they were not the slow

growth of a subsequent period, embodied in narratives composed in the second century. [Even if our appeal must be limited to those Apostolical Epistles which the destructive men of Tübingen universally acknowledge as genuine, the substance of the Dean's argument will hold good.] (4.) Dean Milman further argues that Dr. Strauss does not fairly state that the early notices of the Gospels, in the works of the primitive Fathers, show, not only their existence, but their general reception among the Christian communities, which imply both a much earlier composition and some strong grounds for their authenticity. As to the time when the Gospels were composed, Strauss's argument seems to the Dean self-destructive. The later he supposes them to have been written, the more impossible (considering that the Christians were then so widely disseminated in Europe and Asia) is their accordance with each other in the same design or the same motives for fiction: if he takes an earlier date, he has no room for his long process of mythic development. In one place he appears to admit that the first three, at least, must have been completed between the death of our Lord and the destruction of Jerusalem. But is it conceivable that in this narrow period, this mythic spirit should have been so prolific, and the primitive simplicity of the Christian history should have been so embellished, and then universally received by the *first* generation of believers?

Such is the judgment of Dr. Milman on the great question at issue between us and the author of "Supernatural Religion." And we give it in preference to any direct argumentation of our own. The mythological explanation of the supernatural narratives of the New Testament is to Milman as "inconceivable and incredible," as miracles are to our author. The canons adopted by Strauss appear to him "subversive of all history," and "I must acknowledge my unwillingness," he says, "to abandon the firm ground of historical evidence, to

place myself on any sublime, but unsubstantial cloud, which may be offered by a mythic and unintelligible philosophy. "The place, as well as the period, of the composition of the Gospels, is," he adds, "encumbered with difficulties according to this system. Where were they written? If all, rather the first three, in Palestine, whence their general acceptance without direct and acknowledged authority? In different parts of the world, their general acceptance equally improbable [*i.e.*, if not possessed of direct authority], their similarity of design and object altogether unaccountable."

The author of "Supernatural Religion" labours to inflict a deadly wound on the canonical Gospels, through the side of the spurious Gospels. But, on this subject, Milman, with the "enlightenment of the nineteenth century," says, "I cannot admit the spurious Gospels, which seem to me the manifest offspring of Gnostic and heretical sects, and to have been composed at periods which historical criticism might designate from internal evidence, though clearly mythical, to involve the Genuine Gospels in the same proscription. To a discriminating and unprejudiced mind, I would rest the distinction between mythical and non-mythical on the comparison between the apocryphal and canonical Gospels."

On one other point, we venture to confront our author with the Divine whose enlightenment he confesses. "No impartial critic," we read in "Supernatural Religion," "can assert the historical character of the narrative of the Four Gospel. Apart from continual minor contradictions throughout all these narratives, it is impossible to reconcile the markedly different representations of the Fourth and the Synoptic Gospels. They mutually destroy each other as evidence" (Vol. ii. p. 481). What our author thus recklessly says is "impossible," has been done over and

over again. What he calls mutually destructive, has been found by others mutually corroborative. And what no "impartial critic can assert," is asserted by thousands to whom nothing short of the infallibility of the Papal Chair would justify us in denying the attribute of "impartiality,"—and among them Dr. Milman: whom hear—"The best answer to Strauss is to show that a clear, consistent, and probable narrative can be formed out of that of the four Gospels, without more violence, I will venture to say, than any historian ever found necessary to harmonise four contemporary chronicles of the same events; and with a general accordance with the history, customs, habits, and opinions of the times, altogether irreconcilable with the poetic character of mythic history."

ARGUMENT FROM OUR AUTHOR'S CONCLUSION.

We call attention, thirdly, to what may be fairly argued—even if we were to admit our author's conclusion—that "we do not find any real trace even of the existence of our gospels for a century and a half after the events they record." The conclusion itself we utterly deny. But suppose, for a moment, that we accept it, we ask what "traces" have we of our Gospels about the year 180? Is it that about that time these cropped into view for the first time, no one knows where or whence? Not so. But that at that time these books were in the possession of the Christian Churches all over the world, accepted by them all as ancient, and believed by them to be original and authentic records. The old Latin version contained these gospels, and it is maintained that it cannot have been made later than the middle of the second century. The old Syriac version contained our gospels, and it was made, probably, at a still earlier date. In these versions (to which, by the way, our author makes no reference) we have his-

torical evidence that the African churches and the Eastern churches were in possession of our four gospels at the date named by our author, and before it, and regarded them not as a few of the "many" gospels which reported the life of Christ—but as the only authoritative records of the life. Turning to the West, we find equally explicit testimony respecting its churches in Irenæus. This father, born in Asia Minor, and acquainted in youth with Polycarp, the disciple of John, became bishop in Lyons before the period named by our author, and describes the four Gospels, with the names they now bear, so definitely, that there can be no question of their identity with our own. He gives reasons, fanciful enough, why there should be neither more nor fewer than four. But while his reasons are not to the credit of his judgment, his giving reasons at all shows how certain it was held that there were four, and only four, Gospels, that could claim to be original records of the life of Christ.

We have thus the South and East and West—representing, we may say, the entire Christendom of the second century—uniting in one testimony. The four Gospels did not make their appearance stealthily, at the date at which our author confesses that "traces" of them may be found. By that date, and before it, they were acknowledged all over the world as containing the true story of the life of Christ, and the only authoritative version of it. And the number of copies of the Gospels possessed by the Christian communities throughout the Roman Empire at that time, it is believed, could not be fewer than 60,000. What follows? Why, that the Gospels must have come into existence very long before. It was not by any Council, nor by any concerted action on the part of the Churches, that they arrived at a conclusion so singularly unanimous. It was by the natural operation of the evidence there was that these four Gospels had come

down from Apostolic times. That "many" histories of Christ should have been written, as indicated by Luke, is most natural. And that the bulk of these should rapidly disappear, when more complete and authoritative records appeared, is equally natural. But that contemporaneous histories should disappear, and be superseded by other histories a century and a-half later—that this supersession should take place through the silent, un murmuring, unconcerted, and necessarily unpremeditated consent of innumerable independent societies scattered over the world—is, in the favourite words of our author, "inconceivable and incredible." That the snow over a thousand miles should be melted simultaneously by one warm power acting from above, we can understand. But that the books possessed by a thousand Churches, supposed to contain the story of the author of their religion, should melt away out of the hands of these Churches, and that their place should be universally occupied by new books, containing a new story, we cannot understand. Many wonders take place "while men sleep," but this could not.

Our contention is, then, that what is known as to our Gospels in the second half of the second century proves their existence long before; and, in ordinary controversy, would be accepted as sufficient evidence of their being original records of the events to which they relate.

THE SUPERNATURAL IN CHRISTIANITY PROVED WITHOUT
THE GOSPELS.

We call attention, lastly, to the fact that even if our author succeeded in discrediting our Gospels as witnesses, it would not effect the purpose on which he has set his heart—namely, to destroy the evidence for the Supernatural in the

life and character of Jesus Christ. There would still remain evidence, more than sufficient, to prove that the earliest version of that life and character contained the Supernatural.

Setting all "Gospels" aside, we have "clear, direct, and irrefragable" evidence that the most primitive version of Christ's life was the Supernatural. No version could be more primitive than that of Peter, James, and John. Now, Paul held conferences with these first disciples, and was in perfect agreement with them as to what he should preach "unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision." And we have from his own pen what that was:—"I delivered unto you, he writes to the Corinthians, "first of all that *which I* *received*, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures; and that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that He was seen of about five hundred brethren at once, of whom the great part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that He was seen of James, then of all the Apostles. And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" (1 Cor. xv. 2—8). That these are the words Paul our author knows, for he accepts the Tübingen theory of the authenticity of four at least of Paul's Epistles. And we have in them the version of Christ's history which was given to the world by its eye-witnesses, Peter, James, and John, as well as by Paul. It is often insisted that Paul cannot be quoted as a contemporary witness. Paul was not a personal witness of Christ's works, but he is a contemporary or primary witness of what the primitive story concerning these works was. This story he had not at second hand, through the refracting medium of popular wonder, but from those who were for three years the most intimate and of

fidential disciples of our Lord. There is thus the most positive evidence that the supernatural character ascribed to Christ's history was not the fruit of the ignorant wonder of a later age, but belonged to its most primitive form.

This is attested by the earliest fathers as well. Prove it doubtful, if you can, whether it was from our Gospels or from other Gospels that Clement, Polycarp, and Justin Martyr derived those sayings of Christ which their writings quote, you cannot impair the testimony which these writings bear to the character of the Christianity of their times. Clement and Polycarp speak as familiarly of the Supernatural in our Lord's life as do our Matthew and Mark. No process of elimination or sublimation can change Clement, any more than Matthew, into a naturalist. And there is not the faintest evidence that "in the beginning of the Gospel" there was any other version of it than that which, with Paul, we "also have received."

This conclusion may be reached by the aid of our author himself, through another line of argument. He accepts the Tübingen theory of an irreconcilable difference between Paul and the three Apostles, Peter, James, and John—a theory as groundless as Strauss's Mythical, which it was designed to supersede. (See Canon Lightfoot's admirable discussion of "St. Paul and the Three," in his Commentary on Galatians.) The "Apocalypse" was written, our author holds, by the Apostle John, and as early as A.D. 68-69. Passing by the question of date (and remarking only incidentally on the monstrousness of the assumption that "it is clear" that Paul is one of the "false Apostles" referred to in the Epistle of our Lord to the Church in Ephesus (Rev. ii. 2), and one of those who held "the doctrine of Balaam," referred to in the Epistle to Pergamos), we only fix attention on the fact that the Apocalypse, written confessedly by one of the Apostles,

proves the primitive version of Christianity to have been fit of the Supernatural. Even if the Church in Jerusalem—represented by Peter, James, and John—was, as this writ maintains, but a Jewish sect with a superadded faith in the Messiah as having come, it is plain that their idea of the Messiah, interpreted by the Apocalypse, was as lofty as that of Paul; that they believed Him now risen from the dead, enthroned in heaven, with all power in heaven and on earth, the object of the worship of angels and redeemed men. And that, by our author's own showing, the first witnesses of as for Christ preached not a natural, but a Supernatural Christianity.

We wonder whether it ever occurred to our author to consider the dilemma in which he places himself by admitting, even urging, the Johannine authorship of the Apocalypse, and denying the supernatural? He has laboured hard to dim the lustre of the name of John, but is he prepared to say that John was a deliberate impostor and forger? The Apostle represents himself as having seen visions of the ascended Christ and of heaven, and sends to seven churches in Asia Minor seven letters, which he says were dictated to him by Christ. In fact, the whole book, according to its author, is the transcript of Divine revelations; and if the author's statement is not true, the book is not a pious, but a wicked fraud. It was written, according to the critics whom the writer of "Supernatural Religion" follows, in the interests of a Jewish Christianity, and in opposition to the Pauline, or Gentile Christianity; and to confound the Pauline Christianity, its author had the audacity to put the seal of Christ on his book, and to say that he received it all by "the revelation of Jesus Christ"! All of which, on the anti-supernatural theory, was an impossibility, and must therefore have been a lying imposture. The credit of the Apostle's honesty cannot be

saved by any device whatsoever. If you say that he was a lunatic who imagined it all, we reply that there is too much "method in his madness" for any such assumption. A dream may be mistaken for a vision ; but this book contains a consecutive series of visions, with declarations of the Divine will and purposes, which even the credulity of sceptics will not venture to ascribe to a dreamer. And then the letters to the churches ! These were either revealed to, or consciously invented by, the author. And the theory which denies the Supernatural leaves us no alternative but to regard the man who declared that "all liars" shall have their portion with the most wicked of mankind, was himself the chief of liars !

We are pained to bring such words as these even into the most remote and hypothetic connection with the name of the Apostle John, but it is necessary to show the straits and difficulties to which our unbelieving critics would reduce us. Emerging from the chaos of these speculations, we come into daylight when we accept the Gospels, with all that is supernatural in them, as simple records of truth. And there is positively nothing to prevent our enjoying the light and comfort of day, but the dictum that the Supernatural is "antedecently incredible" ; a dictum which, as we have said, would need the supernatural to prove it, and which is singularly akin to the spirit of that evil power, predicted by the Apostle Paul, that should "exalt itself above all that is called God."

CONCLUSIONS.

The chapter of "Supernatural Religion" in which the author sums up his "CONCLUSIONS," adds nothing to the argument, but reveals how difficult he found it to "buy again the things which he had laboured to destroy." To the renewed assertions of the inconceivability and incredibility of a Supernatural Revelation attested by supernatural evidence we are content to oppose the latest dictum of Mr. Mill, who admits that "it may be said with truth on the side of miracles that considering," among other things, "that a gift extremely precious was due, as far as appearances go, to the peculiar mental and moral endowments of one man, and *that that man openly proclaimed that it did not come from himself, but from God through him*, then we are entitled to say that there is nothing so inherently impossible, or absolutely incredible, in this supposition as to preclude anyone from hoping that it may perhaps be true." "To the conception of the rational sceptic," Mr. Mills says, "it remains a possibility that Christ actually was what He supposed Himself to be—not God"—Mr. Mills thinks, "but a man charged with a special, express and unique commission from God to lead mankind to truth and virtue." Mr. Mill's idea of what Christ supposed Himself to be, does not affect our present argument; at the least He supposed Himself "charged with a special, express, and unique commission from God." Now such a commission for any purpose must be supernatural, and to the "conception of the rational sceptic it remains a possibility"; so that our author, judged by Mr. Mill, is not entitled to be considered a rational sceptic.

CAN WE LOVE AN IMPERSONAL GOD?

We have already quoted from this chapter of "*Conclusions*" our author's description of Christ's character, and of His "sublime religion," love to God and love to man. We are now prepared to show that one of these "fundamental principles" is, on our author's system, an impossibility.

The personality of God, it will be remembered, must be "totally excluded" from our conception of Divinity. But how can we love a God that is not personal—a God incapable of *knowing* us or of *loving* us?—a God that possesses no attribute which can possibly be the object of a rational affection? We might as well try to love the monument of Lord Nelson in Trafalgar-square. Jesus Christ was consistent with Himself. In teaching His ethics He made God known as our Father (Matt. vi. 26-33), and therefore He could consistently renew the old commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." But in this He was utterly wrong, if our author is right. "In our admitted incompetency," we read in one of his earlier chapters, "to form any conception of the Supreme Being as He is, we have only two alternatives:—1. To renounce all attempts to gain fuller knowledge of Him, and to rest in the mere belief that there is a Supreme Being, of whose nature we cannot know anything; or, 2. To gain such knowledge of the Supreme Being as we may from the study of nature, aided by our highest conceptions of morality." (i. 73-4.) *We* believe that there is a third alternative—to accept a well-attested Revelation, with such aids as it may furnish, if not to conceive of the Supreme Being "as He is," yet to give us conceptions of Him which are true, worthy, and practical. And we might maintain that even the "knowledge" attainable under our

author's second alternative might include the conception of the Divine Personality. But in his hands the alternative is one framed expressly to exclude this conception: hence he adds, "it is obvious that either alternative is fatal to miracles." He must, therefore, abide the consequences. To love a God "of whose nature we cannot know anything" is impossible. To love a God of whom, whatever else we know "from the study of nature," we know that He is impersonal, is impossible. The two alternatives, in fact, are one. For we cannot be said to "know anything" of God if we do not know that He is personal; we cannot know that He is mighty, that He is holy, that He is wise, that He is good. We rather know that these attributes cannot belong to Him. And Jesus was altogether in error when He taught men to "love God." It was to teach them what, on our author's principles, was simply impossible. It was a perpetuating of the great fallacy of a Personal God. Chakya-Mouni, instead of having the second place, should have the first, for he ignored God, or left His existence an open and undetermined question.

We are not surprised at our author's inconsistency in this matter. "By some," said Dr. Hampden long ago, "the basis of all evidence to the truth of any scriptural revelation has been destroyed, by their denying to natural theology even the most elementary truths of Divine science,—whilst, by others, the light of natural theology has been kindled with furtive embers from the altar of the Scripture revelation, and made to glow with a brightness not its own." (*Essay on the Philosophical Evidence of Christianity*, p. 253.) But our author does both by turns. When he would prove the impossibility of miracles, in the beginning of his book, he denies the most elementary truth of natural theology; the Divine Personality; when he would reconstruct some system of his own, in the end, he recalls, not openly but really, the rejected

truth, and makes it the basis of a moral duty which he would make independent of all revelation. We are not surprised, we have said; for men find it hard to "turn their back upon the light while it fills the atmosphere around them." But we cannot allow to the assailant of our faith the advantage of the "furtive" means which he thus employs. He must not be allowed to serve two masters. Let him hold to the one or to the other. And we observe, from his reply to Professor Lightfoot, that he is prepared to make his choice. If he can be convicted of inconsistency in his final expressions, "there can be no doubt" (he says) "which view must logically be abandoned." If he may not ascribe intellectual and moral attributes, such as wisdom and beneficence, to an Impersonal God, then he will have his Impersonal God without them! He is not afraid to follow Jean Paul Richter in his dream, to traverse the worlds and find there is no God; to look up into the immeasurable void for the Divine eye and see only an empty, bottomless socket; and he will hear without tears the terrible answer which ends all questioning—"We are all orphans, I and you; we are without a Father."

It is noteworthy, we may remark in passing, that Mr. Mill, in his *Essay on Theism*, does not seem to consider Pantheism worthy even of mention. Polytheism and Monotheism are with him the only real varieties of Theism. He must have seen that Pantheism is but a verbal Theism, and cannot ultimately be distinguished from "No-theism."

DO WE NEED LIGHT AND HELP?

There is only one other point in these "Conclusions" to which it is necessary to advert. "Escaping from" the "figment of a Divine Revelation," "we exchange a Jewish anthropomorphic Divinity made after our image, for an omnipresent God under whose beneficent government we know that all

that is consistent with wise and omnipotent law is prospered and brought to perfection, and all that is opposed to Divine order is mercifully frustrated and brought to naught." "Making the Divine will our will we shall recognise in the highest sense that God is with us." "The argument so often employed by theologians, that Divine Revelation is necessary for man, and that certain views contained in that Revelation are required by our moral consciousness, is purely imaginary, and derived from the Revelation which it seeks to maintain." "It is as irrational to expect or demand knowledge unattainable naturally by man's intellect, as it is for a child to cry for the moon." (Vol. ii. 491, 492.)

These sentences contain in brief our author's last utterances. We need not repeat what we have said on the logically dishonest procedure of first denying personality to God in order to undermine the possibility of miracles, and then ascribing to God omnipresence, beneficence, wisdom, omnipotence, and even mercifulness. If these are the attributes of the God of nature, to deny the possibility of miracles is little short of fatuity. But the new point in the passages just quoted is, that the alleged need of a Revelation is imaginary, and, in fact, derived from the alleged Revelation itself. What a comment on these assertions do we find in the just published "Essays" of Mr. Mill! Instead of finding in "nature" a basis for faith in the "beneficence" and "omnipotence" of God, his argument from "nature" is, that God cannot be *both* beneficent *and* omnipotent. We think that there is a better solution of the great mystery which perplexes him than the old notion of two rival powers; but we have to do at present only with the fact that this student of nature, who, according to his own statement, never had any prejudices in favour of Revelation to bias his mind, saw in nature not the optimism of a government under which all that is good prospers, but the pessimism

of a system of anarchy and disorder. When he wrote thus, he felt the need of a Divine Revelation; and while he would remove the domain of the supernatural from the region of "Belief," he would fain find it in the region of "Hope." In this sense of need he is at one with the most earnest thinkers of every age—of which it would be easy to present a catena of witnesses, from Socrates—whom Plato represents as saying, "We must wait patiently until some one, either a God, or some inspired man, teach us our moral and religious duties, and, as Pallas, in Homer, did to Diomedes, remove the darkness from our eyes,"—to Goethe, who, on his deathbed, exclaimed, "More light!" "Oh, do not tell me," says one of the most free-thinking theologians of Germany, Dr. Schwartz, of Gotha, "that to act uprightly, and to do one's duty, and to have a good conscience, are sufficient. I ask you, ye virtuous ones, who among us does his duty and has a good conscience in the highest sense of the word? Not one among us all; we all are, and remain, striving and struggling ones, who in manifold ways err, and stumble, and fall short" (*Christlieb's Modern Doubt*, p. 92).

But the cry for "knowledge unattainable by man's intellect," which has come from the very depths of human souls in all ages, is, we are told, as irrational as the cry of a child for the moon; and we can quite understand how our author should think so, for we cannot find a sentence in his book that indicates any deep moral yearning of his own—a want which proves him incapable of understanding the world's necessities, and of appreciating the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But the great cry, for the most part confused and inarticulate, which has echoed along the ages, can be pronounced "irrational" only on one of two suppositions—either that man can find out for himself all that he needs to know, or that, whether he can or not, there is no one outside humanity to hear the

cry, and no power to answer it. If we needed fresh proof of man's own impotence to attain Divine knowledge, we should find it in our author himself, for whereunto has he attained? Take away those forms of thought and expression which he has derived from Christianity, and which are inconsistent with his fundamental theories, and what have you left? Only a vague and undefined Pantheism, such as was possessed by the fathers of the Aryan race, at the remotest period at which they become known to us, three thousand years ago! In the department of physical science, and in those arts of which that science has been the creator and minister, the world is new. How comes it to pass, then, that in the department of the spiritual and divine, the most pretentious thinkers of the day can give us nothing better than may be found in the Ancient Vedas, "an aspect of religious feeling," described by Archdeacon Hardwicke as "always bordering on Pantheism, often passing quite across the border"? Eighteen centuries ago the Christian Apostle said boldly, in the face of the philosophies of Greece, that the world had failed to know God by its wisdom; and the world, though unwilling to confess its impotence, was at that time deeply conscious of the failure, and sinking into the weariness of despair. The centuries which have elapsed since have only confirmed the Apostolic verdict. "In criticism and in negation, philosophy has made many strides; men have grown wiser in pulling down, but not in building up." System after system has arisen and blazed proudly for a season, only to go out in the darkness whence it came, like the *ignis fatuus*. Positive religious results there have been none; and a more miserable spectacle cannot be imagined than that which is presented to us in the history of unaided human thought—man a weary drudge, like the horse in the grinding-mill, traversing the same weary circle without end.

But, failing to find light in sparks of our own kindling, may we not look elsewhere without charge of irrationality? If we know of a surety that there is no ear to hear our cry, we may not. It were folly to cry to what we know to be only vacant space; but we revolt from a conclusion which would make us, men, of that whole creation which has long "groaned and travailed" for deliverance—the most miserable portion. We are not willing to lie down in the world's dust in despair, to curse the fate, or the nature, or whatever else it be, that has given us aspirations and cravings which must remain for ever unsatisfied. We want to know what even Professor Tyndall hopes may some time be discovered, what that is in which dwells "the promise and potency of all life" and of all good?—what the "omnipresent mystery," the "fundamental reality," of which Mr. Herbert Spencer speaks as "underlying the universe." We cannot content ourselves with the philosophic dictum that it is "unknowable." We will allow no man, whatsoever his pretensions to wisdom, to stand between us and the object of our quest, but will seek after God if haply we may find Him; and if we find Him sufficiently revealed only in Christ, we shall not be ashamed of our faith. The weariest souls find rest in Him as of old; the greatest intellects bow down before Him; His very enemies veil their faces in His presence; the goodly fellowship of apostles, and prophets, and martyrs, worship Him; He is the world's last and only hope. Let the sun be darkened in the heavens if you will, but take not from us that "Sun of our soul,"—the Christ of God.



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